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EZRA

BY

Perlita Wolff

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REID PUBLISHING COMPANY
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DEDICATION

WITH a whole heart full of appreciative love, this book is given to my sainted mother. Its intention and dedication are her justification in all that seemed difficult for me to grasp of her exalted thought and lofty ideals, while she walked the earth with me.

To E. M. J. K. the friend who first said to me: "You must write," thus planting the seed of endeavor in my consciousness; and to G. S. G. the friend who watered that seed, and urged it on to growth and fruition, the loving thanks of the author are hereby given, with the sincere hope that they may not feel disappointed at the outcome.

PERLITA WOLFF.

PREFACE

EZRA in no way aims at the explication of the teachings of Christian Science, but only to tell in simple fashion, of possible and actual experiences in the lives of those who endeavor to regulate them in accordance with the principles of its teachings.

That such do rise above the discords and diseases of the man material, is a fact too well established for cavil; so not to argue, but with the hope that it may reach one weary heart seeking surcease, and turn it to the contemplation of divine possibilities, the author sends forth this volume, grateful if its heart-message reach even one, struggling out of the darkness of belief, into the light of understanding, as was she herself when *The Messiah* found her.

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EZRA

I

MOTHER AND SON

MOTHER'S keen eyes scanned the face of her big boy wistfully, as they said good-morning to each other. Ezra, big handsome and clean, had been the light shining in this mother's darkness for many years. Today outward darkness has disappeared, but the touch of hero worship, born and bred in adversity, is slower to disappear. The happiness of her boy would once have been more to her than her newly restored vision, had not this restoration been accomplished by an awakening, a spiritual dawn of light, without which now, earth would seem most drear.

This mother had never seen her boy until four and twenty summers had passed over his head. She had felt the touch of baby fingers on her face, and baby lips pressed to her own; and as the years, so grew the boy and man with them. A manly boyhood, and a true manhood, retaining with increasing strength, the tenderness born of her dependence.

For she was blind, this dear mother, even when first he knew her, and in his grief at the full discovery of her affliction when a very small boy, all the chivalry of his nature arose in a vow worthy of a grown man, and kept as one, to be her "knight and shield" all the days of his life.

The full import of the fact that her beautiful eyes were sightless, came suddenly to him when, as a boy of seven, he stood with her at a window and saw his gallant father ride away to The War. Julius Halevi stood in his stirrups and waved his plumed hat toward his wife and child. The little Ezra, looking up at her with a world of pride and ambition in his baby face, saw the tears flooding his mother's eyes as they looked in the opposite direction to the one taken by the brilliant figure of the soldier.

"Oh, mother, are you not watching father?" he exclaimed. "See, he waves his hat to you," putting up his hand and gently turning her face toward the fast disappearing rider.

"Yes, son, mother watches," she made answer in heartbroken tones. Then all at once the long pent up wells of her sorrow were loosened, and with tears and sobs, she gathered the now frightened child to her breast, and told him how in the year in which the greatest blessing of her life, her young lover, had come,

had also come the worst affliction. It had come upon her unawares, "like a thief in the night," as she walked in the moonlit garden of her guardian's, Rabbi Spillman's, beautiful home, with the one who was all the world to her.

"How beautiful the moonlight on the lake, Miriam. It seems to presage peace, and in plenty, for our future, dear one," he had said.

"Moonlight, Julius?" and she nestled closer to him. "I was about to say we had better return to the house, as the night seems all at once to have grown dark and chill."

"Dark and chill! Why what can you mean, my Miriam?"

For a moment silence. Then through the garden rang one wild note of sadness and dispair. "*O my Julius!*" And the dear maid he loved, was swooming in his arms.

Tenderly he bore her homewards, and all that love could think or do, was done. But the truth had to be faced. Miriam "would never see more." So said the noted physicians and occulists in all parts of the world; for notwithstanding her protestations, Julius saw in this only another reason for not delaying their marriage. He gently but firmly overcame her scruples, and insisted on his right to be eyes as well as all else to her in this world. He took her away and used his large fortune freely. But no

ray of hope found he in any land whither they wandered. In time a sort of settled acceptance and gentle "resignation to the will of God" possessed her. Only once, when after three years her boy was born, mother-love strained at the bonds and almost broke them.

"Julius, husband, is it possible I am not to see our firstborn?"

"Beloved, let me be eyes to thee." Thus tenderly had he grown to address her. "Eyes, deeply dark and true; hair of richest chestnut; his mothers' mouth and chin; and his father's Roman nose—a nose that means to be prominent in life's purpose. Now do you see him, my dear?"

And as usual, a little satisfied sigh escaped her, as he caressingly smoothed her dark hair.

"Ah," she murmured, "I wish 'Julius' might be his name. It is the dearest of all names to me. With my beloved husband and son beside me, what need shall I have for eyes."

But in accordance with the time honored custom of the Jews, the boy was named 'Ezra' after his paternal grandparent.

Never again did Julius hear a complaint from her lips. Mother-love in all its fullness possessed her, and so well did mother-love teach her, that her boy felt no lack, and knew no grief until now, at this parting with her young

husband; the first, for more than a day, in all of their married life; and made necessary by his country's need.

This story told, simply, for his young ears, the mother waited. The boy was struggling with the man.

"My boy?" at last the mother said.

"Mother, I do not feel like a boy. I am a man from this moment, and promise you a man's devotion."

This phrase Ezra no doubt quoted from some tale of chivalry which his father had told him. But how overgrown his language, none could question his earnestness and precocious sincerity of purpose.

"Come, dry your tears, mother, and let me keep them dry until my father comes home, so he may know that I have cared for you."

But the father never came home. Many, many years have passed since then, and the only token of the father has been a sword, blood-stained, and a locket containing the picture of a family group of three: father, mother and son. The locket Miriam hung on Ezra's watch-chain, and the sword was laid reverently away with other belongings of the dead.

The morning ushering in our story was bright with sunshine, though cool. The only cloud

was upon the face of Ezra, and the wistful look in the mother's eyes had dispelled it at once had Ezra turned his gaze that way. But a little imp had been visiting him, and this little imp —one of a hitherto unsuspected obstinacy— had brought with itself a sense of unrest and disquiet.

The atmosphere of home had ever been pervaded with a quiet piety, and the old Jewish custom of sabbath, sabbath evening, and holiday devotions at home, adhered to. Ezra's baby thought had not been fed alone upon tales of knightly valor, but evening after evening as the trio sat around the hearthstone for a season of heart-to-heartness, Julius Halevi had read aloud heroic tales adapted to the young from the Bible, and the fitness of the characters to their names, made a strong impression on his mind. Now, as the new-sighted mother-eyes followed him to his accustomed seat in his father's chair, he turned and reaching out his hand laid it gently on her own, saying:

"Mother, why did you name me 'Ezra'?"

His mother, startled at the unusual reproach in his voice, answered:

"It was your grandfather's name, Ezra."

"Why then did my grandfather's parents name him thus, and so lay a burden upon us both, greater than I at least seem able to carry."

"What mean you, son?"

"Why, mother, was it not Ezra's duty as a judge in Israel, to divorce the sons of Israel from the wives which they had chosen from among the nations?"

"What has that to do with you, Ezra?"

"Why, don't you see, mother, that I must obey and follow out the traditions of our elders? Does not my name make it incumbent on me to put away all hope of happiness with one who has departed from these traditions, wandered off after other gods, and forsaken the only true God of Israel? Can I keep for wife one who has betrayed her faith and become a renegade?"

"Ezra, beloved son, could unfaith in God as a supreme Being, have accomplished the wonder of restored vision?"

"Mother, this is some devilish work. God, truly, alone could have sighted these dear eyes," pressing a kiss upon each, "but the claim is here made that His agent was one who has deserted the very fundamentals of the law: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me'; and now Leah proclaims the man, Jesus, her inspiration, and the woman at Boston the revelator of the means by which she reaches these strange and unnatural conclusions."

"But, Ezra, if these conclusions bring about harmonious results, why call them devilish?"

"Mother, are you also ready to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Messiah? You and my father have taught me to shun even the mention of that name, except in condemnation. Why this sudden and curious change at the suggestion of a girl, a mere child, whose thought should be turned toward domesticity, and who should leave these larger questions of life for the thinkers."

"Ezra, your father and I have done our work ill if superstition and bigotry are to bind your bright intellect. Can you not afford at least to respect the power of good? Suppose we call it mind that has torn the bandages from my blind eyes. Can you not believe the *real* power of good to be mental?"

"Mother, this child claims it to have been the power of Christ, and I must not listen to such heresy. The claim of Christ to be God, is what our forefathers justly punished with death; and must we now believe that the invocation of his name can bring about the very miracles, so called, which helped to crucify him? Dear little mother, God knows I am grateful to Him for His wondrous love in opening your eyes; but I must regard the matter as a special dispensation to one so good and faithful to his law; or I should fear His wrath. Let us not speak more today of this, and forgive my moodiness."

II

ENTER LEAH

EZRA, who had risen during the conversation, now led his mother to her seat at the table, and resumed his own, drawing his chair close. It pleased him to sit opposite his exquisite mother, and to watch her deft fingers moving among the cups, never less sure even when they had been self-directed. But each time the clear eyes into which a new light had come met his own, a troubled impulse made him frown. As Miriam was yet to learn by sight the difference between a frown and a smile and as her boy's voice never lost its tenderness, the only perception of Ezra's discontent came through her sensitive mother-instinct—a subtle sense which insisted that all was not well with him just now.

The morning meal at Rosemount was usually an informal affair, though since the marriage of Ezra and Leah it had been partaken of together. As in the preferred absence of a maid Miriam now passed him his cup, he asked as he

reached out his hand to receive it: "Mother, where is Leah?"

Just then a light step was heard on the piazza, a shadow crossed the threshold, and a bright face appeared at the door—held just enough ajar to admit a bright curley head with a pair of laughing "gold eyes" as Ezra called them.

"Good morning, people all! May I come in and nibble? I'm so hungry! The water was delightful, but even fishes must eat, you know."

Ezra arose and placed a chair for her; his face turning a shade paler as she looked at him.

"Why did you not come out, Ezra? Has the little false god of laziness been tempting you? Coffee? Please, Milady, and all the sugar and cream you can spare. Some of Jinny's rare corn bread too. Oh, how nice and comfy!" And she settled herself comfortably down to a delicious little breakfast, such as only Jinny could prepare.

"How much longer, Leah, do you think you can brave the morning chill? The river must have been very cold this morning?"

"Yes, but so delightful! I'm afraid, Ezra, I will have to call you up some morning to break the ice for me. Our indian summer cannot last much longer. More coffee, please, Milady. Oh, what an appetizer good thinking is!"

Ezra made an impatient movement. His mother glanced up deprecatively at him. She was so lovable and beautiful—this radiant young being—so full of young life and joy. So unsuspicious up to now of any cloud upon the horizon of her and Ezra's happiness. Miriam's glance seemed to plead for a little more patience with their favorite. However, Ezra arose, and pleading matters of importance, left the room. It was the first time that he had ever gone away without a good-by kiss for each.

"Milady, what ails him?" Leah wonderingly asked.

"Well, Leah, to be frank, it is this new doctrine of ours."

Leah was astonished. She had been so completely carried away herself with the beauties of this new religion, and the wonders which she had seen accomplished through its application, that Jewess though she was, she could not understand readily why even a Jew should refuse to consider it.

"Milady, and you?" she exclaimed.

"Leah, I cannot doubt. But the conviction is upon me that other than his wife or mother must bring the truth home to Ezra."

"Perhaps you are right, Milady. But now let us to our morning's work. Play is over for today. And it has been so good—oh, to think

what a wonderful thing life is, and we have been putting it aside for death! I called last evening, on the way home, at uncle Jerry's. He was very happy. Mary was convalescing and I promised to bring you over today."

She slipped her hand into the elder lady's arm, and together they made their way to a sunny morning room, bright with flowers, pictures and other pretty things, such as happy people gather around them. In a particularly cosy corner was a table and two chairs; and on the table were books with which Milady and her young companion soon busied themselves.

III

"MILADY"

When Ezra stepped out into the sunshine he did not seem cheered by its brightness, contrasting as it did with the gloominess of his own thought.

"What can the little mother be thinking about," he soliloquized, "to be so enraptured with an idea so contrary to the teachings of our holy faith. And Leah! This comes from permitting young women to wander about all alone. If Leah had never been sent away from home to school, these heretical ideas had never found lodgment in her busy brain. What to do? That is the question. Of course until her views of religion regain their normal status, Leah must never become a 'mother in Israel.'"

To be a wife and not a mother, is almost as great a sorrow as could come to a devout Jewish woman; and by "regaining their normal status," Ezra meant that Leah's religious opinions should again be biassed by his own, and the hidebound traditions of Judaism so-called.

Three months before our story opens Ezra and Leah had been married, and life had opened up happily before them. The girl's sincere affection and tender solicitude for his mother in her affliction had won his heart, and on her last vacation from the fashionable boarding-school where several happy years had been spent, Ezra had been moved out of his calm affection for his mother's ward, into a sudden love which was to be perfect—or so he thought.

Leah was the daughter of an old friend of Ezra's father. She was brought to Miriam's home shortly after the sword and other relics of her husband's bravery. The friends had been comrades in battle also, and a mutual agreement in writing was found upon her father's person, when they brought him in from the field mortally wounded. He had barely been able to hand the sword and trinkets to the men who brought him in, and to say to his superior officer that he had performed the last sad rites for his friend, Captain Halevi, when he expired. This agreement or compact which they took with other papers from Lieutenant Luria's pocket, was signed with both of their names, and was to the effect that if either survived the other, the survivor should care for the dear ones of the fallen. So following the instructions pinned to the compact, Leah had been sent to

New York by the authorities, a wee todler, accompanied by her French nurse, and had crept at once into the affections of Ezra and his mother. She was four years of age and barely remembered her own mother—an English lady of rank, who had married her young American lover and come to live with him in the States.

The Lady Luria had brought her own maid with her to be her personal attendant, and the servants quickly caught the trick of calling her "My Lady" from Nannette, who refused to untitle her beloved mistress, even though she herself had chosen to forego the distinction for love of her husband. "Your country and customs are mine henceforth," she had said when he voiced his regret at being obliged to transplant his "Lily" to a new environment. Whether or not the new environment was the cause, his lily drooped, and when Leah was two years old, the mother died. Nannette had declared that no one should touch the babe but herself, who had loved the mother so much, and Lieutenant Luria was glad to leave the child in the care of one so trustworthy, when, a little more than two years later, the civil war broke out and he decided to go to the front with his regiment.

From the first, Nannette worked to keep alive the spark of remembrance in Leah's mind by placing a photograph of the mother con-

stantly before her, and by repeating her pet phrases and the little prayer which she had taught her to lisp. "This is a picture of your dear mamma," she would say, holding it up to the child "And Milady," as she shortened the word, "will want her little daughter to love her always, and be good, so that some day she may meet her mamma in heaven." Then the baby would kiss the picture and repeat obediently and lovingly the prayer taught by her mother, and impressed on her memory by Nannette. She wanted to meet her "Milady mother" in heaven.

When the little girl was brought into the presence of the "beautiful lady" as Miriam was sometimes called, she stood for a moment on one foot, poised like a bird preparing for flight. Then, as Miriam stretched out her arms in the direction of the voice presenting the child, Leah sprang forward, straight into them, and nestling her curly head into the bosom against which she was pressed, queried:

"Are you *Milady*—and is this heaven?"

Miriam kissed the little inquirer and said:

"I hope I may be to you, little one, all that you may mean by the name."

"It was my dear mamma's name," with a quick sob.

"Dost think you can give it to me little Leah?"

The child drew her head back and scanned Miriam's face intently. "Oh yes, yes," she cried. "You are so—*so truly just like her!*"

She again nestled into the arms which were around her, and immediately there was formed an affectionate comradeship, heightened as the years went on, by a loyal and loving service to the blind *Milady* of her heart.

IV

A PRESCIENCE

BUT school days had to come, and one morning in late August, Miriam gently broke the news to Leah, that she had made arrangements for her at the select boarding-school of the Misses Worden, where with the exception of holidays and special occasions, the next three or four years of her life would be spent. A storm followed.

"Milady, what have I done that you should send me away?" she dolefully asked.

"Leah, I send you at a sacrifice to myself; not as a punishment to you, child."

"But mother," she called her so sometimes, "who will be eyes to you with Ezra and myself both away? I cannot, cannot go." And two sweet young arms were coaxingly entwined about Miriam's neck, for a little almost weakening her purpose.

"But, Leah, do you remember that you are nearly sixteen? We must not neglect your education."

"But, dear Milady, may I not have tutors at home? Oh, I shall write to Ezra, and ask him to coax you. When does he return to us?"

"He has been detained at Boston longer than he expected, but should be here soon. But Leah, Ezra will think with me, that our little girl should not grow up wholly unfamiliar with the outside of life. Stay-at-homes are apt to be narrow; and with your gifts of intellect and song, we want a broad and thorough education for you. I have chosen Miss Worden's school because it is at the same time fashionable and thorough, and mindful of the higher destiny of its pupils. The religion taught there and lived is the same to which we have been accustomed; and so you will miss less the sweet hours we have spent together in contemplating the works of our fathers' God, and seeking to learn their infinite meanings. Do not fail, Leah, to attend your religious duties. And think of the dear seasons of reunion which we shall have, when you may bring me as much information as you can, of the progress of the world from which I am necessarily cut off to a degree."

"Yes, but does not Ezra bring us both sufficient of this for our needs? And do we not find all the religious solace that we require, at the synagogue and from our good Rabbi Spillman?"

Miriam struggled with herself a moment;

and then she said: "Leah, I am going to whisper to you, that as Ezra was reading to us, on the last sabbath morning when he was home, from the prophet Isaiah, a promise stood out very prominently; and if you remember, I asked him to read it again, and then again. It thus became indelibly fixed in my thought. The promise was:

"*I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.*

"A strong prescience came to me that I must send 'a little child' to find this 'way'. So you see, dear heart, Milady is not altogether unselfish in thus sending you forth. I know of no other place to send you than to school. But this voice in my heart will not be stilled, and the thought of school came instantly with the thought of your going forth. So perhaps it is the finger of God, pointing the 'way' in which this 'little child shall lead' me."

The sightless eyes looked hungry, and Leah could not bear the yearning expression on the face of the one who had been more than mother to her.

"Beloved, say no more about it. I will go, and perhaps I shall find some very wonderful

occulist who will give you your heart's desire; and when I do I shall bring him to you quick, *quick*, and claim my reward in never having to leave you more."

"Sweet child! It is not because I need my eyes that I want them. But oh, I want to see my Ezra's face, and yours."

And Miriam yielded to one of those gentle fits of weeping which seized her only occasionally, and which no one but Leah had ever witnessed, not even Ezra, since the day that he comforted her, when his father went away to The War.

Leah soothed her as she always did; not with words, but by just standing by her and holding her close, and pressing her pretty cheek on Milady's head. "So, that is over for now." And Leah kissed each dear eye, and rejoiced to see the happy smile returning.

"Now, Milady, here is your bunch," jingling the housekeeper's keys before her mother's ear; "go and do your morning duties quickly, for I am going to drive you to the post office, and perhaps we shall pick Ezra up on the way. I shall meanwhile run down the road and get some of this lovely ozone."

And with a laugh which was as silver bells to the fond ears listening, she sped away, the very picture of youthful health and beauty.

V

AN ACCIDENT

To follow Leah in her three happy years of school life would make another tale, so full of interest and joy were they. But to the circumstances which led to such wonderful results, we may well devote a chapter or two.

Amongst the teachers at the school was one who from the first, interested Leah intensely. This was a Frau Betty Wagner, instructress in German for the juniors. A woman of large heart and fervent sympathies. Leah observed, however, that these sympathies were wholesome and corrective, rather than gentle and conceding.

"Now, my dear, this is a problem for you to work out for yourself. I have given you the rule, now apply it." A loving pat on the bent head of the student, and a hearty, deep chuckle which never failed to bring a responsive smile; then would come:

"Ach, kinde, weist du nicht das Gott ist Liebe?"

This last sentence it was which impressed Leah most. It seemed always to hover on Frau Betty's lips. "But what has that to do with algebra," thought she. Then after awhile she began to notice that whenever Frau Betty did drop this benediction, good results followed. Problems seemed to work themselves out; and the girls wondered why they had been so dense as not to have comprehended them sooner.

With many other gifts, Leah possessed a very rare mezzo soprano voice—"A voice full of tears," Ezra used to say. Leah, however, laughingly disputed this. "It holds too much joy—no room for tears in it," she would answer, and then sit at the piano and rattle off some light and airy ditty, which brought out the color of her voice to a nicety. Ezra would pinch her ear and call her "vixen", and Milady would listen happily to their badinage.

It had been specially arranged that while at school, Leah should have the best vocal training possible, and Professor Segner, the highest authority of the day in voice culture, went into raptures on hearing her sing. "You will be great," he said; and his prediction seemed about to come true, when one day, towards the middle of her last year, a peculiar epidemic of nose and throat trouble broke out in the school. The epidemic spread so fast that it became very

necessary to quarantine a part of the school. Leah begged that she be permitted to help care for the pupils, as the teachers were nearly all worn out: Frau Betty being the only one who remained cheerful and active.

After many protestations, which Leah at last overruled, she was permitted to take her turn at nursing. She was indefatigable, here, there and everywhere. The patients soon began to listen for her coming. Under the direction of a trained nurse, who had been called in to oversee the treatment prescribed by the doctor, Leah became quite expert in administering the remedies.

One night as she leaned over to adjust an appliance to the throat of a sufferer, her eiderdown gown brushed in some way against the lighted alcohol lamp on a table near the bed; and in an instant the flame spread upward.

Leah, whose presence of mind was superb, opened the gown at the neck and threw it into the wide fireplace. Somehow while she had sustained no outward injury, she must have inhaled or swallowed the flames, for on trying to call for help, she found that she could not utter a sound, being prevented by a stinging pain in her throat and mouth. Everything was done for her that possibly could be done at the school. Leah implored them by writing, not to send

word home, and the principal was only too glad to accede to her request.

Within a month Leah's speaking voice had returned and become almost normal; but the song-bird in her throat was hushed. Of course Leah grieved, but she hoped that the loss was only temporary. However, two, three months passed by, and no sound could she produce; and at last Miss Worden declared that she could no longer keep the knowledge of this misfortune from Leah's relatives. Leah pleaded that one more specialist be tried, her professor himself offering to bring one from a distant city; and Miss Worden consenting under protest, Professor Segner left at once on his mission.

VI

FRAU BETTY DEMONSTRATES

THAT evening as Leah was about to retire, a loud, wholesome rap on her door brought a startled "enter" from her lips. Frau Betty appeared in the doorway and opened her arms wide to the forlorn little maid.

"*Ach, kind weisst du nicht, dass Gott ist Liebe?*" she murmured in her loud, but mellow gutteral.

This was really the first time that Frau Betty had ever put this question to Leah, for the latter had never seemed to require any such reminder before. Her days at school had been wholly glad, and as Frau Betty gave most of her time to the needy ones, she and Leah had not come so much in contact, though Leah had always felt drawn and warmed in watching her helpfulness to those needing her care.

Now, as Leah felt for the first time the comfort of those strong, warm arms around her, she nestled into them and let her tears flow freely.

"So, so, kleinchen, God did not send this to you."

Leah was startled.

"Who did, then, Frau Betty?"

"No, no. This is not real, not real."

Frau Betty had this confident way of repeating her declarations that seemed to carry conviction. Leah drew herself from the enfolding arms, and placing her hands on Frau Betty's shoulders, looked into her eyes with a world of yearning in her own young ones.

"Frau Betty," she said in an awed undertone, "I have long known that you were different from the rest. You have a power which seems unearthly at times. What is it?"

"Does my little friend will that I tell it her?"

"O please, please! But, Frau Betty, I am afraid."

"*Ach, kind weisst du nicht, dass Gott ist Liebe?*"

"Yes, Frau Betty, but is He not also a 'jealous God' and prone to wrath? What if you are going to tell me something which will change my awe of Him, and then He should punish me for disrespect? But no. He has not punished you. Let me hear, Frau Betty, let me hear. My soul tells me that I am to rejoice."

They seated themselves, and Frau Betty began her narration:

"Child, many years ago when my soul was shut in by the darkness of unbelief, and my body racked with pain proportionately; when life seemed unbearable and only a burden of sorrow, a message was brought to me. It is the one which I pass on to you and others: '*Ah, child dost thou not know, that God is Love?*' I had lost my young husband and little son in a railroad wreck, and life had become a useless thing. There were evenings when I walked the world, so desolate! I could not remain in one place. Change, change, was all I cared for. One evening I followed a small crowd which was entering a building. I found myself in an auditorium well filled with people, who were listening to a woman reading. I sank into a seat, and at once felt strangely quieted, though my ears took in not at all, the meaning of the words. Perhaps I fell asleep; I never knew. But coming to myself with a start, I heard the words which I now tell to you. The woman with a most radiant face was speaking them: '*Ah, child dost thou not know, that God is Love?*'

"Instantly I knew it; and also that the truth was being poured out beneficently on my poor wounded heart. No other word did I hear, although the talk lasted for nearly an hour. At the close of what I now understood to be a religious meeting of some kind, I pressed forward

with the rest, and in turn laid my hand in the one extended by the woman who had spoken. Obeying some impulse, I stooped and kissed the hand; it was quickly withdrawn, and with, 'it is not I, but the Father,' she gently rebuked.

"How often I had read these words of Jesus, but without attaching any special meaning to them. I walked out as if on air, and with only a confused sense of what had taken place; with the exception that I was to be granted an interview on the morrow. The blessedness of that interview I shall never forget. I was told that *God is Love* and in no way responsible for the evils that beset mankind; that he never sent sickness or sorrow to His creation; that in fact he knew nothing of them, nor were they any part of His infinite containment. Further research convinced me that I had found 'the pearl of great price'—the Christ, Truth, which was to heal all the misconceptions and limitations, as well as the sins and diseases of human experience; and show forth man in his true being, a perfect child of God."

Leah's eyes were burning brightly as she sat with tightly clasped hands, looking up into the illuminated face of Frau Betty. The glow of enthusiastic conviction was upon this face; carrying its sincere message right into the heart of the eager girl.

"Dear friend," at last Leah said, "I believe that I have found, in what you tell me, that for which my mother sent me forth. As you perhaps know, she is blind. She believed, when sacrificing herself and me by sending me from her side, that it was upon a mission. What, O dear friend, if my mission is fulfilled, and I have found, even as she believed I would, the 'way' which is to put light and life into her eyes! But, oh, it is overwhelming, and dear friend, forgive me.

"But, I wonder if you know, that, as a Jewess, it will be difficult for her to accept freedom through the teaching of Christ, who appeals to the average Jew, only as a man of sedition and heresy."

"Would it be difficult for her to at least try for her own relief, that which may be helpful now to you, if you will permit?"

"What do you mean?" she almost whispered.

"I mean, will you permit me to apply my knowledge of God as Love, and of the efficacy of the Christ, Truth, to your loss of voice, and see the restoration complete before the advent of the specialist from Philadelphia?"

"Yes, my dear, yes—anything which will help to certify the good news, which I begin to feel that I am to take to her."

"Then, dear child, take this chair by me, and

try to think of yourself simply as a child of God; and to know that in Him you can have no pain or sorrow, for He is Love, and Love alone."

So the two sat near each other; and the older woman at once closed her eyes and remained in silent prayer or communion with this power, unknown to Leah as yet, for about twenty minutes.

At first Leah gazed at her in wonder and awe; but gradually as she tried to think on the lines laid down, a sweet sense of peace and freedom began to steal over her, and all at once she fell asleep. When she awoke, she found herself alone, and the light turned low; for a moment she had only a confused recollection of what had transpired; then, rising, she shook herself free from her dressing-gown, turned out the light, and crept into bed, where immediately she fell into the most refreshing slumber which she had enjoyed since the epidemic broke out.

How quickly habits are formed and broken. Before the accident, Leah had usually awakened with a song upon her lips. This next morning she moved about her preparations for the day, in the same silence as of the past few months, though the languor and inertia were conspicuously absent. It did not occur to her to try

her voice and see if she had regained it. She had lost heart completely, three days ago, when Miss Worden insisted on sending word home, and had not made the effort since. The omission had already become a habit. Instead this morning she let a hundred pregnant questions chase each other through her thought. These made her eager to speak again with Frau Betty. There would be no opportunity however, before evening, as Frau Betty had charge of the juniors in the mornings, and Leah was to see the specialist in the afternoon. Her lessons and a new sense of responsibility made the morning pass so quickly, that Leah was astonished when the hour for dinner arrived.

Shortly after dinner, she was called to the music-room. The great man who was to restore her voice or doom it to silence forever, had arrived; and the excited little professor was with him. As Leah entered, the professor rushed eagerly forward.

"Ah, Doctor, here is the little song-bird who is to conquer the world some day."

He had always insisted that Leah's wonderful gift should not be lost to the Cause of Music, and Leah, after protesting that home was to be the center of its influence, had laughingly given up the argument; and so the professor lost no opportunity of declaring his intention.

The great man was moved by Leah's beauty and simplicity, and the bravery with which she submitted to all the details of an examination which was strenuous, to say the least.

"Why did you say that this young lady's throat had been burned?" he asked. "I see no evidence of such condition. The tissue seems perfectly healthy, and the vocal cords normal, with no stringency whatever."

Then pointing to the piano, and placing a chair, he bade her sing. "Try," he said, "and let me see."

So Leah seated herself, placed her fingers on the keys, and, without effort, lifted up her voice and sang gloriously. It seemed to come forth so naturally, that she herself was not even astonished, and continued her song to the end, wholly ignorant of the interesting tableau going on behind her.

The professor and the doctor stood looking at each other; the one in utter astonishment, and the other in open-mouthed indignation, both seemingly petrified into inaction; from very different sensations, however. The professor was overcome with joy at the restoration, and the doctor with a sense of having been made ridiculous. Nevertheless, as Leah's voice grew fuller and clearer to the end of the verse, his choler melted into admiration and delight;

and by the time she had finished and risen to her feet, and was turning towards them with shining eyes, a flush upon her velvety cheeks, and her pretty hands clasped in unconscious pleading, the stern specialist—whose time was valued at so many dollars a minute, and who had left very urgent matters to oblige his friend, coming on with him to New York for the purpose of helping the little girl whose misfortune would mean a loss to the whole world—was completely won over. Advancing towards her and taking both of her hands in his, he said:

"What does this mean, my dear young lady? I understood that you had lost your voice; but if what I have just heard is loss, what sort of a *wunder kind* must you have been before?"

"Doctor, this is something which I do not comprehend myself. I did not dream that I could sing when I took my seat at the piano. I only thought to be obedient and try."

She knit her brow in a brown study for a moment; then a light seemed suddenly to break upon her. "Can it be? can it be?" she murmured somewhat audibly.

"Can what be? Miss Leah. Try to think clearly; for if, as you say, you could not sing yesterday, and today your song is so perfect, then indeed a miracle has surely been wrought in your behalf."

"That is it. *A miracle has been wrought.* And now perplexity deepens."

Hereupon she related her experience of the evening before with Frau Betty.

"She said," continued Leah, "that it was in the power of the Christ to heal disease. Now if I have yielded myself to this power, then what is to become of me? I am a Jewess."

A look of dismay passed between these two earnest Jewish men. The professor recovered himself first.

"Miss Leah, you are not about to fall into this miserable nineteenth century trap for the believers in the one true God of Israel—this trap that is ensnaring so many of our ablest thinkers today? What will the mother and brother say?"

"I cannot tell. I only know that my treasure has been restored to me, and without material aid. Frau Betty said that the power which Jesus exercised, was the power of Mind; and—O my soul!—I feel that she is right.

"But how can I thank you enough, kind sir, for your interest in my behalf? I beg that you will exonerate me from all blame in having caused you to leave your patients for my sake, and to lose so much valuable time; but indeed, indeed I did not know."

Her eyes swam with tears, and a much less

kindly man might well have forgiven the pretty penitent.

"Well, well, say no more. I am glad for you. The only recompense I shall ask is a ticket for your first opera. But this thing must submit to investigation. I shall at once seek out this Frau Betty, of whom you speak. I, also, may learn a better way. Good-by, dear child, and let me as a father, say to you, that you must be very sure that this doctrine is not of perdition, before you become carried away with it."

The professor made an engagement with Leah for the next day, and left the room with his friend. Then a sudden sense of loneliness and fear took possession of Leah, as she found herself alone.

All of the old superstitions of her religious training, were coming up to mock her new-born faith. She had known little else than gladness in her young life; but now a question, fatal to the old satisfaction in the religion in which she had been reared, hovered on her lips:

"Have I not always known God? Have Ezra's teachings been erroneous? Dear Ezra! What will he say?"

What indeed!

VII

A BIT OF RETROSPECT

A LITTLE flush mantled Leah's cheek as she soliloquized thus. What Ezra would say had been a strong impetus with her ever since she had begun to feel his strength and mastery as a tiny child. From the first he had included the new "little sister" in the protective chivalry which he exercised towards his mother.

His "women folk" had been all the world to Ezra, although occasionally his "protection" took the form of restriction which hampered, or would have done so, had they not like all good Jewish women, recognized in this sole male representative, the head of the family.

Had Ezra's nature not been a manly and noble one, fulfilling so well the promise of his young boyhood, the hero worship of these two pure souls had been his undoing. Not a trace of selfishness could be found in him, although some might think it a flaw that he should feel himself lord and master of this little domain,

as well as guardian of the well-being of its two other inmates. But to Miriam and Leah, his loving mandate was a delight to obey.

On Leah's last vacation, spent at their summer home in the beautiful Berkshires, she had appeared very wonderful to Ezra. He could not grasp the fact that this change in her was due to unfolding womanhood. What magic in the grace of a pure adolescence! The object, if a very young girl, is seen through a mist of marvel by the awakening thought of a young man.

Ezra had not mingled much with maidens of his own age. He had devoted all the time which he could spare from his studies, to the loving task which he had taken upon himself when a mere boy, of being his mother's knight and protector.

The time had come when Ezra was obliged to leave home to attend college, there to fit himself for his chosen career, the practice of law. He studied the law, as he supposed like Ezra of old, after whom he tried to pattern himself, as "being named for him". This unusual idea had been fostered in Ezra by his father, who often told him to "be as great a man, my son, as was Ezra of Israel, after whom you are named, and father and mother will be content".

Thus had been planted in Ezra's unusually

impressible thought, that which was to bring his greatest life experience.

It had always been a question in Miriam's mind whether Ezra would have left her side even for college, if there had not been Leah to take his place in a measure. But straight as a needle to the pole flew he home, when either vacation, or some slight pretext, served as an excuse. And the delight of his home-coming! Such happy days, when he would take them on the lake, or driving, or walking; and in the evening, in Milady's cosy sitting-room, or on the cool terrace, repeat for their benefit, tales of college life and his own acquired lore.

When Ezra came home at twenty-one, a finished college bred young man, graduated with high honors, and with an opening of exceptional brilliancy in the law office of an old friend of his father—Leah was a happy young thing of fifteen, with a pleasure in living which only comes to those who spend much of their lives in the open air. Her education had not been neglected, and Ezra soon found himself challenged on points which he deemed matters for only a man's strong intellect to cope with.

Music was a strong bond of sympathy between them. Ezra, himself a musician of no small accomplishment, had taught Leah some duets of Lassen, which, to his own piano accom-

paniment they sang together in the lengthening evenings of early fall. Miriam, with her knitting in her deft fingers, and seated in her own particular chair by the open grate fire in the big chimney place, would sometimes join her voice to theirs in a beautiful trio. She had a rich contralto, which had been well cultivated. Leah's voice was as yet undeveloped, but sweet and true, and of rare quality.

These evenings were delightful to all three, and small wonder that they dreaded the time when they would be compelled to leave their little retreat in the mountains, and return to their home in the city, where even Miriam's limitations could not relieve them of a certain amount of social duty.

VIII

A VISIT HOME

As LEAH'S thought turned homeward on the day of her great experience, a longing to return there seized her. There were still about six weeks before her graduation in June, and these began to look interminable. She felt that she must see Milady at once, while this new hope was upon her. She would ask permission to go home for a week. Who knows what this week would bring forth for Milady, and so for them all.

She went to her room and tried to busy herself with some study until Miss Worden should be disengaged and free to speak with her. But her thought wandered and turned continually to the possibility of freedom for Milady. If only Milady could be made to see! What else could she ask of her heavenly Father?

Here a maid entered to say that her brother awaited her in the parlor. Leah lost no time in wondering why he had come, but sped down the stairs and almost into the arms of big Ezra,

who was waiting for her with a small heart flutter on his own account.

"Oh, Ezra, why have you come? Tell me that you have come to take me home," she implored breathlessly. "And how is Milady?"

"Why, Leah, how did you know? Yes, I have come to take you home for a few days. The little mother misses her girl so much, and I am obliged to leave home for a week or two, on a business trip to Boston. Just before the spring examinations, I thought that it would not hurt you to run away for a wee bit. What do you say, Leah?"

"I say, yes, *yes*, YES, Ezra. I was just about to ask permission to run home for a week or so. Oh, will these school-days never end! Really, Ezra, I am much too big for school now; wont you let me just stay home? I don't want any of the fussy glory of graduation, and surely I am needed by Milady."

"Impatient child! And school so near ended! But this frame of mind is new to you, Leah. You were never wont to leave a task unfinished heretofore." And Ezra was puzzled to see tears of pleading in Leah's eyes. He wanted to kiss them away; but somehow he had begun to feel a little shy before Leah.

She dried her tears and tried to smile.

"Well, I will try to be content with half a

loaf then," she said, and ran away to make her preparations.

These impromptu home calls were not uncommon during the winter months when Milady and Ezra were in the town house, so not much time was lost in gaining permission, and Leah soon came down—a charming vision in her new spring costume, with the pretty flush excitement always brought to her cheeks, and a sparkle in her eye. At all events we must accept this as Ezra's verdict, though it is never difficult to picture happy youth as beautiful. Was it this beauty, or was it perchance a sudden recognition of her grown-up-ness, which turned Ezra silent most of the way home?

Leah was unusually quiet also, after her little flutter was over. She was conning the question in her mind: "Shall I tell Ezra?" but could not rid herself of the thought that it would be better to tell Milady first.

And may it not have been that a psychological moment was passing in the lives of these two young people? Each had been so longing to see the other; and now when side by side they scarcely found one word to say. Perhaps each had discovered something new in the other as well as in themselves. At any rate, in the drive to their home, few of mere words passed between them, though the way seemed short.

"Here we are," at last said Ezra, as the carriage stopped before the door. "Come to my mother, Leah, and cheer her while I am gone."

The sudden shyness that had fallen upon Leah entirely disappeared as she set foot upon the steps of home. Up she ran, and as the door was opened for her from within: "How do you do, John, and where is Milady?"

Hardly waiting for John's answer—"In the sitting-room, Miss Leah"—she bounded up the stairs and in a minute had Milady in her arms.

"Ah, ma mie, I'm not going to leave you again. No, don't ask me. It's of no use," placing her hand daintily upon Milady's lips which were just opening in laughing protest.

But in truth, Milady was glad to have her sunbeam back.

After the greetings were over, and Milady had resumed her seat, with Leah on a stool at her feet, Leah pinned a bunch of fragrant early pale violets on Milady's bosom.

"There," she said, "they just suit you. Do you know, Milady, you are the most beautiful little woman in this whole wide world? And oh, I'm so *glad* that you belong to *me!*"

"And where do *I* come in?" quoth a manly voice from the doorway, where Ezra had been taking in the scene with loving eyes.

In response to his mother's outstretched

hand, he now came forward, pressed his lips to the hand, and then brought a second stool to his mother's knee. An artist might have painted this group *con amore*. Miriam, still beautiful, if really not more so than ever, with her clear-cut features, pale olive skin on which Leah had never seen a blemish, lovely soft dark eyes in which no tale of uselessness was told, lofty brow and glossy black hair plentifully sprinkled with pure white.

Her garb was simplicity itself. A dinner gown of soft shimmering grey silk open at the neck, where a fine lace bertha was held together in a V by an amethyst of rare size and value, and a little lavender-trimmed lace confection on her hair. Leah's violets capped the climax of harmony, and a very queen she looked with that air of pride in her two idols—for this the good-to-look-upon young people were.

Ezra, in these moments of relaxation with his dear ones, seemed almost boyish, and then resembled his mother most. But his friends outside in the workaday world, declared him to be the replica of his father—tall, stalwart, and of a forceful personality. His features were strong like his father's; but just now his expression was gentle and sweet, like his mother's. Long years of trying to read her every thought in caring for her, had created a certain likeness to

her; but she liked him to tell her that he was fashioned like unto his father.

His hair was dark, heavy and wavy, just escaping the effeminate curl. As his head and Leah's came close together, the contrast was beautiful. Leah's hair was like golden sunshine, with glints of bronze in certain lights, full of soft fluffy waves and tendrils, which would creep out. It would be hard to describe her face, whose beauty lay as much in her changing expressions as in perfection of features. It was purely a spiritual face, and at times angelic. Her eyes were unusual. Gold color, the pupils widely dilating on the smallest provocation, excitement or emotion making them seem black. Her skin fair, velvety and tinged with peach bloom. Her teeth perfect; and the poise of her head actually classic. She was a little above the average height, but very slender. There had not been time to change her dress, but her walking skirt of reseda spread around her as she sat, and some lacy waist above, blent well with the grey of Miriam, and contrasted well with Ezra's conventional black.

Yes, they were Miriam's chief joy in life, and now her own desire seemed trending in line with the mystery working in their two young hearts.

"My son," she murmured, caressing his hair

with her love-laden fingers, "it was good of you to bring her."

"Little mother, if being good to myself is being good to you, then I must fess up."

"But the bestest of all, is how good he has been to me, in bringing me," said Leah. And thus the fond things spent the short half hour before dinner.

After this joyous function they repaired to the parlor, chatting happily for an hour or so. Then Leah went to the piano which was opened by Ezra, and with eyes fixed on the "symphonic mater" as she had been calling her all the evening, began at once to sing, to an accompaniment all her own, these improvised words:

Oh, dainty, modest violet,
  Upon my mother's breast,
That breast as pure and sweet as thou,
  Where I, too, oft find rest.

How tenderly thou'rt nursed upon
  That bosom with whose rise and fall,
Is breathed a fragrance far surpassing
  Thine, thou sweetest flower of all!

Lie there, Sweet, thou one so pure,
  Hast found a bed befitting thee;
A resting place of Truth and Love,
  Which rivals e'en thy purity.

IX

LEAH TELLS MILADY

AFTER the first expressions of delight at the wonders of her voice, Ezra said: "Where did you find your words, Leah?"

"From my heart, Ezra, and the music too—inspired by this picture here. Could an artist soul like mine," dramatically, "see, and not proclaim?"

Leah, laughing at their amazed expressions, promised to "sing you a few others, if you are very good."

Milady now declared herself ready to retire and Leah rose to attend her. Ezra accompanied them to the foot of the stairs. He kissed his mother good-night, and as Leah placed her hand in his, he held it for a second, then raised it and pressed it reverently to his lips. He watched them as they ascended the stairs hand in hand. But Leah never glanced back. Poor child, she was foolish enough to be at once ecstatic and annoyed at Ezra's action.

"Why," thought she, "this sudden ceremoni-

ousness? Can it possibly be?" Could what possibly be, she did not voice even to herself, for should it prove not to be so, how could life be lived. With a shy little blush in the darkness around Milady, Leah pressed her own lips to the place where his had been. Then shaking off the dream which was keeping her silent:

"Now, Milady, we will make ourselves comfy and have a good long chat before I let you get a bit of sleep."

Leah was anxious to broach the subject which had occupied her thoughts exclusively before the awakening about Ezra came. But the broaching was not so easy after all. She knew so little about it herself—and what if she should raise Milady's hopes and see them unfulfilled. This would be too cruel.

Miriam herself gave her the opportunity: "Leah, dearest, why do you suppose I feel so happy tonight? My heart is singing a song of praise to my Maker. It is as though I had suddenly been delivered from an incubus. To be sure, darling," as though in answer to Leah's unspoken solicitations, expressed in a quick embrace, "no one without eyes could be happier than I, and next to God, my children have made me so. But tonight I seem to have wings. A sense of impending joy seems to possess me, and it is almost more than I can contain. What is

it, Leah? You have something to tell me, dear."

"Mother, has your quick instinct hinted what I dare hardly say to you? Let us first say our prayers together, and perhaps God will place the words in my mouth with which to bring us both into the light. Pray you aloud as you do when alone, and let me feel the benison of thy love for God."

So the two bowed their heads, and Miriam began that most sacred of prayers to the Jew, The Shema':

"*Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be the name of the glory of His Kingdom forever and ever*

"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

"My God, I thank Thee, that Thou hast the power to fulfill this promise. Grant it for my children's sake and mine, who love thee. Amen."

Leah had so often before heard just this petition, but tonight its pathos seemed to her to be overwhelming.

"Mother," she cried, with a sob in her voice, "what if I should tell you that I believe that my mission is about to be fulfilled. What if I

tell you that I believe I have found that for which you sent me forth—that which is to make you free."

"What do you mean—oh my child, what can you mean!"

"Mother, we have just declared: *The Lord our God is one God.* Do we, or have we believed this?"

"Surely, Leah."

"Surely not, Mother, or why have not results followed in keeping with such faith. Let me tell you, Mother, something which has forever destroyed my faith in the old-time conception of God as a Being able both to create and destroy, to love and hate, or to kill for vengeance. It has been proven otherwise to me, and I say this advisedly. For God, to be God, can only love. So if God loves His children, should you think that He would or could cause them to suffer?"

"But, Leah, this is heresy. Dare you question your heavenly Father?"

"No, Mother, but I begin to question my responsibility to see Him through the eyes of tradition and the elders, no longer. But I hardly feel competent to explain more fully than that I firmly believe that this, to us, new conception of God as only Love, consciously entertained, has already proved a blessing to me. Let me

tell you what has happened." And Leah told Miriam the wonderful story of the experience with her voice.

"It seems wonderful, truly; but Leah, you speak of *Christ* in connection with this occurrence. How can a Jew concede power belonging only to a prophet, to this man who deliberately set aside all the teachings of the elders, and claimed for himself what the Jews will never grant, that is, the *Messiahship?*"

"I cannot answer your questions, Milady; they occur to me as to you. But let me ask Ezra about it. He knows everything." And a fair cheek was tinged with rose, and a tender light crept into a bright eye.

"No, Leah, let us not yet speak to Ezra concerning this. Let me think it over alone first. I question how the application of a religion, and one apart from the only true religion, can remove any physical weakness or disease. But the desire to see—Leah, that is great enough to overcome mere prejudice, and perhaps after I have prayed over it, I shall ask you to bring Frau Betty to see me. Now let us have our reading, and then go to Ezra. It is still early, and he may leave us tomorrow."

So Leah tucked Milady in bed, and sat beside her and read to her from the Psalms, the ninety-first. She was astonished herself to find

new meanings in this favorite Psalm of theirs. But she would think no more of this tonight. The Psalm finished, she kissed Milady good-night, and left the room.

As she stepped into the corridor she hesitated. Should she go down to Ezra as usual, or to her own room? She stepped to the head of the stairs uncertainly, and looked down. As she did so, Ezra looked up, and settled the question for her.

"I am waiting for you, Leah," he said. "Won't you come?"

And Leah went. And how did it happen that she needed the support of a pair of manly arms around her to enable her to reach the parlor? And how was it that Leah's lips had suddenly reached the level of Ezra's? Had she grown to his height, or had he stooped to conquer? Who can analyze the motifs or actions of love. One had risen and the other bent, in the natural attraction of thought to thought, untrammeled by any physical unlikeness or duplication. O the weakness of a strong man, and the power of a weak woman at such a time! Love is a leveler, and when pure and true, merges two beings into one so perfectly, that no seams or rough edges can be found anywhere.

It would seem a bit of thievery to watch and record the sweet ecstasy of these first few

moments of hallowed bliss. How could any author speak of, or faithfully depict even his own experience of the kind? He should never attempt, therefore, to portray that of another. Let us turn away from the contemplation of this unique moment in the lives of our hero and heroine, and visit Milady in her wakefulness; for so we shall find her far into the night of doubting hope and pious struggle.

One of Miriam's rare moments of rebellion was upon her. Mother-love had made her feel that this was a portentious evening for her children, and delicacy and tact had taken her earlier to bed than usual, so that Leah might be freed from her self-imposed duty of "putting Milady to bed," which "pleasure" was always "stolen from Susan," Milady's loving little maid, whenever Leah was home to enjoy it.

But somehow, instead of prayer, only rebellious argument came to her lips, and at moments escaped in audible utterance. "Why," she asked herself, "why did God thus afflict me? Have I not always loved and served Him? Have I not always feared to offend Him, and kept sacred the ceremonials and obligations of our faith? Can it be, as Leah says, that God did not afflict me thus? Who then? What then? Ah, my God, if I am daring to abrogate Thy supremacy elsewhere, or to doubt Thy wisdom and reason-

ableness, forgive me. Let not Thy vengeance further fall. Let me rather find for once, only the loving side of Thy nature, and feel that Thou wouldst no more deprive Thy loving child of any good, than I, a human mother, would place an impediment to joy in the way of my children. Let me trust Thee enough to trust myself wholly to Thy mercy, and show me the way out of this darkness, so that as a perfect creature, I may better serve my Creator."

Thus through the night, Miriam's thoughts repeated themselves, until towards morning, peace as a dove descended in the way of conviction that God would bless any child of His who tried to exemplify, mentally or physically, the perfection of God.

Milady slept late the next morning, and Leah, tiptoeing to her door early, would not awaken her. She and Ezra could hardly keep back the sweet news from mother, any longer. But a weary wistfulness in Milady's sleeping face and form, kept Leah from giving even a light good-morning kiss. So down she went to Ezra, and together they wandered forth. Yes, wandered, for they had no plan for their morning's walk, save that they take it together.

Into the park they went. The air was quite balmy with early cleanness and spring promise. The sparrows were chattering, and a hungry

squirrel sat up to look at them, expectantly. But no morsel for bird or squirrel this morning. Indeed, so far as our lovers were concerned, even the earth did not exist—at least for the next hour or so. They surely had found heaven and why return to earth sooner than was necessary. But until we earn heaven, we cannot stay there. Just a peep now and then, as bait, is offered us of its joys. These happy ones remembered that they had a mother at home, who must be taken into heaven with them; so home they went and admitted her.

Miriam's joy was so complete, that for the time being her own needs and desires were forgotten; but none of the three ever forgot the perfect happiness of that day of days, and the days that followed until Leah's leave of absence had expired.

It was decided that she should return to school and take the final examinations. Meanwhile Ezra would make the business trip which he had managed to defer. Leah was to dispense with the ceremonies of graduation, make her adieu, and return home and begin the preparations for the wedding.

X

THE WEDDING

So Ezra and Leah were married. The ceremony took place at home, in the presence of a few near relatives and friends. Miriam urged a big wedding, but our young couple knew full well from experience, when their mother really desired a thing, and when she would have it so only for their sakes. They concluded the latter to be the case in this instance, and decided to save her sensitive shrinking from the presence of many persons at once.

Never did a bride look sweeter, nor bridegroom happier than when they stood under the canopy, and bowed their heads to the words of Rabbi Spillman.

Ezra broke his glass with one manful effort, symbolizing his power and readiness to protect and cherish this fair maid of his choice. And Leah modestly but clearly made her responses. Then a few words of earnest exhortation from Rabbi Spillman, and Leah was in her husband's arms. Soon they turned to the dear mother,

pathetically waiting to embrace them. A delicious repast followed, then more embraces, and off for the honeymoon. This was to last not more than two weeks, for notwithstanding the protestations of Milady to the contrary, they decided to return home at the end of that time and defy the mother ever to get rid of them again.

As the carriage drove off, Milady returned to the parlor, and one by one the guests took their leave; the last being the good old Rabbi who had married Miriam and Julius so many years before. A different marriage that, in the midst of gloom at the calamity which had lately overtaken the young bride; and the Rabbi could not refrain from retrospecting a little to Miriam:

"Well, well, Miriam. It seems but yesterday since I read these same words to you. And yet, my daughter, in these twenty-seven years you have not grown old. In spite of trials God has given you grace to remain young."

"Yes, Rabbi, blessings have been many, and my heart has kept young thinking of them. Today, however, I cannot help wishing for my boy's father. How proud he would have been! It is just such a marriage as he would have desired for both."

"Well Miriam, God knows best what is good

for us all. When He sent your affliction He also sent the piety to enable you to bear it uncomplainingly; and well you have bowed to the Almighty's decree."

"But, my friend, after all these years of weak submission to what I supposed was His will, you will now be astonished to hear me say that I begin to question if it has been, or is, His will. I have lately been indulging, and even cultivating a spirit of rebellion at what suddenly appears to me either gross injustice or selfish misrule on His part, or a great mistake regarding Him on our part."

The good Rabbi gasped. "Miriam, what is this you say? Can it be possible you are questioning the intentions of your Maker?"

"No, Rabbi, but may it not be possible that we have mistaken His intentions, or that there may be another source of sorrow than a God who should only love?"

"What other source could there be? There are not two gods. Who or what but God has power?"

"These are the very questions which have occupied my thought since Leah came home. Something which she told me has aroused this line of thought, and I seem unable to put it away from me."

"Do not tell me, Miriam, that you and that

child are becoming mixed up with this new fad of the nineteenth century. This searching out of a different nature for God, and this sacrilegious and familiar mention of His holy name, and questioning of His sacred personality and omnipotence—what would Ezra say to hear his mother speak thus!"

"I do not know, Rabbi, but I believe that my boy would rejoice if this awakening to a new consciousness of God as Love, would bring about a result that has been unattainable by any other means. But," as she perceived the fire of outraged priesthood ruffle the composure of the reverend man's usually kindly voice, "I have done. I did not mean to broach the subject to you or Ezra until I was better acquainted with it myself. And for that, I must wait until my children return."

"Then good-night, Miriam. I pray you are not laying the foundation of discord between your children, for I fear me Ezra had not taken Leah to wife if he had known of this."

"I believe, Rabbi, that you are mistaken. However, it is as yet but a suggestion to me, and perhaps will not go further. Good-night, dear old friend, and give me your blessing as you usually do."

Miriam bowed her head, and the venerable old man laid his hands upon it gently, and mur-

mured the asked-for blessing and then departed.

After this interview, Miriam felt, for some reason, as though a weight had fallen off her. Perhaps it was a relief to have put the thin edge of the wedge into her minister's thought. She had declared herself on a point that had not seemed vital until Leah told her of a possible mistake in their theology. This point was the *goodness* of God; and having once freed her mind to this kind old friend, who had held a loving guardianship over her, almost from her birth, the rest seemed easy. Even Ezra—his was such a bright intellect, and his mother's happiness his first care—surely she had nothing to fear from him! No. This was to be for him a glad surprise, when through her perfect trust and faith, that *promise* shall have been fulfilled. How little even mothers know! This one went up stairs, just ahead of Susan, repeating mentally over and over again, her favorite promise from Isaiah:

"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

XI

ROSEMOUNT

THE honeymoon, two delightful weeks, was passed on the outskirts of a town on the Jersey coast. The hotel to which Ezra had telegraphed for rooms, was within walking distance of an estate on which he had previously purchased an option, intending if Leah should like it, to make it his wedding gift to her.

Leah was enchanted when upon the second morning of their stay, Ezra took her to the place. He had not told her of his intention, preferring not to bias her first impression.

It was June, that dearest month of all the year, the month of roses; and such a wealth of them as here broke upon Leah's vision as they turned the curve in the road, brought an exclamation to her lips.

"Oh how beautiful this place is, Ezra. How I should like to walk through this rose-garden! The house does not seem to be occupied. Do you think that we might venture?"

Ezra opened the gate, and they walked up

a long winding gravel path which led to the house. The path was bordered with rose bushes, all in gorgeous bloom; as were all the boundaries on this side of the unique homestead. The perfume of the roses filled the air, and intoxicated Leah with delight. Other shrubs in flower and lilac bushes laden with fragrant bloom, were here also, but the roses were a feature.

"Surely, Ezra, an artist has designed this outlay. How can sameness have so little of stiffness or monotony?"

"Let us pass around the house," said Ezra, leading away from the broad stairs which gave entrance to the side of the house.

As they turned the corner, being still on the gravel path, they stopped, Leah with her hands clasped—her usual attitude under emotion—taking in the broad landscape. The hills in the distance, faintly outlined in a purple haze, seemed a guardian wall to the lower and gently undulating lands of rich green, and pastoral beauty. Glints of water here and there. Little ponds shaded by willow trees; with cattle looking like animated specks in the distance, sheltering in their shade. Between these distances and the house, there was a silver river, the S——, and the path they were on led directly down to a charming little boat-house and bathing-pavilion.

The house itself was uniquely built. The stairs already mentioned led to an entrance in the side end, up to the second story. But the front of the house was on this broad side, its long wide porch being reached by steps leading up through three grassy terraces, the porch itself being only one step up from the top one. Freshly painted in ivory white, with green shutters and red casements, it glistened cleanly in the bright sunshine. A pointed arch over the center of the porch projected squarely, and was supported by pillars, as was the roof over the rest of the broad veranda, on either side of which long French windows leading out on the lawn, gave the impression of an old rejuvenated colonial mansion; and breathed of comfort and good cheer within, with the minimum of pretension on the outside.

The gravel walk which led to the river, crossed the steps in the terrace, and as Ezra and Leah returned, he led the way up these steps, and to Leah's surprise, up to the front door, where he beat a tattoo on the huge knocker. Almost immediately the door was opened by a natty little maid in apron and cap. Ezra removing his hat, asked permission to inspect the house. Of course this was readily granted, and Leah was conducted wonderingly through all the beautiful rooms, the inside being as per-

fect in its way, as was its setting on the outside.

The house had been built as a permanent home for a family of means and good taste. But circumstances had arisen which made it necessary for them to leave the country before taking possession, and they were anxious to sell. Ezra had heard the particulars from an old man he had met, leaning against the fence of a snug little homestead down the road, at which he was gazing with a curious longing in his eyes. Ezra saluted him and was passing on, when the touch of pathos in the old man's attitude appealed to him, and he turned and spoke a few words about the beauty of the day and the scene.

At once the old man became talkative, and not only told Ezra the history of "the house up yonder," but a bit of his own as well; which resulted in Ezra's undertaking to establish his disputed right to the miniature farm, which he was contemplating so sorrowfully when Ezra first saw him.

"The place up yonder" had not been advertised for sale, but the old man, "Uncle Jerry," as he was called, gave Ezra the name and address of the agents who had the matter in hand with the result which we have seen. The agents agreed for a consideration, to have everything at the house as though nearly ready for occu-

pancy, and so well had they kept their word that Leah was wholly deceived.

"What a charming home this would make, Ezra. Do you think that we could persuade the owners to rent it to us, since they seem not to want to live here themselves? How Milady would love these fresh breezes and soft odors from the roses!"

"Do you really like it so well, Leah? I am glad, for I also am pleased, and hope that we may be able to arrange it. Let us go to the library now."

Leah, rather wondering that Ezra seemed so familiar with the place, followed him into a lofty and spacious room whose tall windows opened out into the rose-garden, which was really at the rear of the dwelling. The shutters on this side had been purposely closed, so that Leah might not think it strange that he should take her through the grounds of an occupied house. Now, as they entered, the shutters were thrown wide by the maid, and the sudden light fell upon the form of an elderly gentleman seated at a table with papers and writing materials before him. He arose and came forward, smiling kindly at Leah's bewilderment.

Ezra shook hands with him and introduced Mrs. Halevi, who was very pretty in her confusion; so that it was no wonder that Mr. Bry-

ant's smile was tinged with admiration as well as amusement. He placed a chair at the tall window for Leah, and then he and Ezra busied themselves with the papers and things upon the table.

Mr. Bryant spoke a few words to the maid, who left the room and in a short time returned with a gentleman of clerical aspect, and Uncle Jerry. These two were witnesses to the deed; and when Ezra and Leah returned to the hotel, it was as the owners of beautiful Rosemount, as the place was named.

Ezra, with a kiss, placed the deeds in her hands, and then she saw that they had been made out in her name. Her delight was unbounded. What she said, we do not know; but we are well assured that he was quite content with the return which she made him.

The rest of the honeymoon was spent, for the most part, in the new home and in a boat. Every morning found the happy pair down by the clear river, where under Ezra's instruction Leah soon became quite expert in rowing. She wanted to be in as well as on the river, but her husband declared that the season was still too early, and promised to teach her to dive and to float, on their return later.

The honeymoon over, both young people were anxious to return for the mother, Leah

declaring that she could "hardly wait to bring Milady here."

After their return, and Milady had heard all the wonders of the new home, two exciting weeks were spent in interviewing upholsterers, buying more furniture, and everything else which could help to complete the comfort of what was now to be home for the greater part of the year.

It was near the end of July when the Halevi family took up their residence at Rosemount and the remaining incidents which lead us to the opening chapter of our book may be briefly narrated.

The matter which had so interested Milady and Leah previous to the wedding, had not been forgotten by either, only necessarily put aside for the time being. Now, as they settled down to the new routine of daily living, the subject was again taken up between them.

Sometimes Ezra was obliged to remain for a day or two in the city, by press of business, and on one of these occasions, as they sat on the balcony outside of Milady's room, overlooking the rose-garden, and enjoying the cool evening breeze, Leah asked:

"Mother, have you come to any conclusion regarding the matter of which I spoke to you last spring?"

"Yes, Leah. After long and prayerful consideration, I have reached the conclusion that God would never punish His child for trying, at least, to present His declared image and likeness in a form as perfect as must be His own. I will therefore ask you to write to Frau Wagner and ask her to come and visit us."

"I am glad, Mother—so glad to hear this. But it has been very hard to keep the good tidings from Ezra. Many times the words have been upon my lips, and only your wishes have kept them from going further. But soon now, he will know—for oh, precious Mother, all that is within me tells me that the time of your liberation is at hand. I shall write immediately to Frau Betty."

Leah stepped within the room and had her letter ready to send off by the village postboy, when he came with his bag for the mail from Rosemount. Then she took from a drawer in Milady's table, a black leather-bound book; the same which Frau Betty had given her on that memorable day at school.

Sitting just within the door where she could have the benefit of the light in the room, she read aloud to Miriam page after page, stopping now and then to discuss some pregnant point with her mother. Thus reading, she came suddenly upon the paragraph which brings out the

idea of the Messiahship of Mind so plainly.

A little cry broke from Miriam.

"There, there, Leah, read that again."

Leah did so, Miriam following the words with her lips.

"Child," she hardly more than breathed, "this is a revelation, and if true, then none may condemn or even criticise us for believing that Messias has come, or rather, been here all the time. Then what authority has christendom had all these centuries for declaring the Messiah to have been a man, one named 'Jesus Christ'?"

"I believe, Mother, that further on the book draws a distinction between the man *Jesus* and the *Christ*, which is defined as *Truth*. It is a new and startling thought, but may after all be found to be the solution of the Messianic problem."

"Yes, Leah. We Jews are still waiting and looking for the Messiah; and here comes a book which declares Him in a manner that neither Jew nor Gentile may cavil at, since His nature is so entirely different from the preconceived ideas of either. Leah, should nothing further come of this great theory—should it remain for us only a theory—what pleasure and spiritual profit may accrue from a closer study! But let us retire now, dear. This delicious night air has made me drowsy."

Two days later came Ezra, bringing from the post office on his way, a short note from Frau Betty, saying that she would be glad indeed to accept their invitation to spend a week or two of her vacation with them.

XII

FRAU BETTY'S VISIT

STRANGE to say, Leah had not seen Frau Betty since the healing of her voice, for just before Leah returned to school for her examinations, the former had been called away, and did not return before Leah left for home. So Frau Betty knew nothing at first hand of the wonderful results of her interview with Leah; and Leah had not written because she wanted to tell her by singing for her; and now she had a happy little flutter of expectancy on her own account, as well as on Milady's.

The next afternoon Ezra drove Leah to the depot to meet Frau Betty. Yes, there she was, the same round, warm creature as ever; tall, and large featured, with a pair of soft blue eyes that one would trust. No silver threads were visible among the golden ones of her hair, and it would have been difficult to guess her age. Her nature was so large as to be companionable to young and old alike. Ezra liked her at once, as Leah had assured him he would. He

had playfully threatened to become jealous when Leah had rhapsodized over her friend during the whole of the dinner of the previous evening. But Leah had pouted, and declared that it was she who should be afraid when once he had fallen under the spell of Frau Betty.

Frau Betty in greeting held out two plump hands, and each naturally placed a hand in hers. Ezra went to see about her baggage, and Leah took that moment to say to her:

"I am so glad that you could come to us, my friend. Milady can hardly wait to see you; and you may imagine how she has become interested in the subject which means so much to us both. But as yet we have spoken no word of it to Ezra, as Milady prefers that he shall know of it first through the demonstration, if you should tell her that there is any probability of something being done for her."

Ach, kind weisst du nicht, dass Gott ist Liebe? Of course something can be done for her."

Ezra here returned with the small trunk which the porter placed in the box back of the trap. Then seating himself so that he was facing the ladies, he and Frau Betty were soon chatting pleasantly; the latter full of enthusiasm about the beauty of the country which they were passing through; and Ezra delight-

edly pointing out the spots of particular interest. The drive home was short and then Frau Betty met Milady.

Miriam was waiting for her in the drawing-room. As the sound of the wheels reached her ears, she arose and stood by her chair in that slightly haughty attitude with which she was wont to meet strangers. But Frau Betty did not mean to be a stranger. She had understood from the first that her visit was to be one of mercy, and this had made her very ready to accept the invitation.

She now went straight to her, and impulsively taking both of her hands and drawing her close, kissed her lightly on the brow. Miriam, rather astonished but far too well bred to show it, spoke some warm words of welcome, and began at once to feel the charm of Frau Betty's big and honest personality.

The three ladies were all eager to begin on the subject which had brought them together, but the claims of hospitality and Ezra's presence deterred them from immediately doing so.

"Frau Betty must be tired, Leah; perhaps she would like to rest awhile in her room before dinner."

She was not tired, but would make a few changes in her attire. So Leah showed her to her room and left her to refresh herself before

dinner. Afterwards this meal was eaten with more than the usual gayety, for Frau Betty sparkled with wit and a superabundance of general knowledge, and Ezra was delighted to cross swords with her and bring out her sensible and sometimes unanswerable comments on matters of the day.

Ezra proposed a walk in the grounds instead of a formal gathering in the parlor. So the quartette took to the lawn, Ezra with his mother on his arm. He never relegated this privilege to any one else, and when his mother was of the party, he escorted no one else, so Leah and Frau Betty walked together, all four stopping at times to remark on the beauty of the evening and charm of the landscape. Leah had so often explained to Miriam the lay of the land and the special points of interest, that she took part in the conversation as enthusiastically as any, and none would have supposed she had never seen a bank or brae of the place.

"Is there time for a row on the river, Ezra? Perhaps Frau Betty would like to see our 'Nook Comfort' by twilight."

"Yes, indeed, Mother. We will take her there. And let me tell you, Frau Betty, you are unusually honored. Milady has never invited any one there before that I know of. This is her own special retreat, where she runs

away to rest and play lazy, when the cares at the house begin to oppress. Sometimes she will not permit Leah or me to enter. She becomes for the time being, a veritable hermit ogress, and we have to trump up some plea of trouble or loneliness before she will even listen to our excuse for invading her territory."

Ezra was patting lovingly the little hand within his arm, which in turn was protesting gently, with little pushes and pinches, while a happy troubled smile at the thought of being brought so much into notice, played upon her sweet face

"I am honored," said Frau Betty, and here they reached the boat-house, and Ezra loosened the "Milady". He took the oars and Leah the tiller, while Miriam and Frau Betty sat face to face in the comfortably cushioned seats in the middle of the boat.

The evening was ideal. The sun was near its setting, and the dim moon was waiting to yield her softer light when her stronger helpmeet should have retired. The change from sunlight to moonlight was so gradual, that no break was noticeable; and just as one merged into the other, Ezra said softly:

"Leah, won't you sing?"

Without hesitation, Leah began. A water song full of ripple and joyous laughter. She

sang as they had never heard her before; and little did Ezra think that the glorious sounds which he heard were a prayer of thanksgiving to God and to Frau Betty. But the latter, as well as Miriam knew, and the sound awakened a wellspring of hope in Miriam's breast, and a feeling of devout humility and gratitude in that of Frau Betty.

Ezra looked at his fair, dear, young wife, and thought: "She has a gift from God". When she ceased, and the little echoes came back, he blew her a kiss on the tips of his fingers, and could hardly restrain an exclamation of pride in his possession of one so altogether lovely.

Leah sang again—a sweet, low, bubbling cradle song, in keeping with the gentle rocking of the boat, and the soft splashing of the oars. It was Denee's lullaby: "Sleep, Little Baby of Mine", and Frau Betty could not keep back her tears at the pathos of the full, rich voice, as it dwelt exultantly on the words:

"What do you know of the bliss,
The rapture I keep, awake or asleep,
Because *I am certain of this.*"

The words, *Ach, kind weisst du nicht, dass Gott ist Liebe?* she uttered almost unconsciously.

Ezra was so lost in delight that her murmur escaped him; but Miriam stretched out her hand to her, and she, taking it in her own kind

one, kept it there till they reached the shore.

The landing-place was in a curve or bend of the river, which at this point wound its way in and out for a considerable distance, making a series of little coves or harbors. Here Ezra had built for his mother, the dearest of little bungalows and named it "Nook Comfort".

Sometimes he would drive her here over the road which led from the rose-garden around by the river; and sometimes row her and Leah up with the tide in the early morning; and, with Leah managing the oars, returning with the ebb tide; and many happy hours they spent there together, especially when they remained there alone; but occasionally uncle Jerry and Mary would find them, and their kind hearts could not refuse the garrulous old man the satisfaction of pouring out his eulogies on Ezra and all he had done for them.

It was now getting late, and Ezra thought that they had better return.

"Here, Frau Betty," he said, pointing to the bungalow, "is Nook Comfort. I think though that you will enjoy it better by daylight. If you say so, Mother, we will return and drive over in the morning."

They all agreed to this, so without landing Ezra turned the boat around and allowed it to float. The tide had turned and Leah was no

longer needed at the tiller, as a touch on either oar was sufficient for steering. A telepathetic invitation from Ezra, was responded to by Leah, and he held the boat while she changed her seat to one beside him, the boat being wide enough at this part. She took the right hand oar, and he the left; and what was more natural than that his disengaged right arm should find its way about her? They were all silent on this return trip, the better to enjoy the charming mystery of moonlight on the water, and the hum of insect life near the shore.

They were such lovers—these two. Why was it that their tenderness towards each other was intensified tonight? Was there a foreboding of misfortune in fortune over both? Ezra's love seemed to pain him, and Leah's heart was full of tears. She thought that it was from happiness at the prospect of release for Milady. But it was ache at having anything in the nature of concealment from him, in her heart.

Then too, Leah felt that in singing as she had for Frau Betty, she had in some indefinable way, deceived Ezra, who was still in ignorance of the fact that her voice, which was such a joy to him, had been remodeled by truth. Now as she nestled close to him she spoke mentally, as though he could hear:

"Never mind, dear husband; you shall soon

know all, and I know that you will not reprove your little wife."

But Leah's was the sunniest of natures, and Ezra always promptly responded to her moods. As the boat touched the shore and he heard her merry laughter ring out at some quaint remark of Frau Betty, the sense of foreboding—if such it might be called—lifted, and he was the gayest of them all as they sauntered up to the house.

Leah now carried the bunch of keys which Miriam had placed in her keeping on the day of their arrival at Rosemount. With a charming air of hospitality, she played hostess, and ordered a light repast on the veranda.

"The night is too lovely to go indoors so soon," she said.

"Yes. It is broad and full—a type of divine Love," answered Frau Betty.

Ezra became conscious of something unusual in this remark. "You mean," he said, "that God's love is broad and all encompassing, as is the beauty of the night."

"Yes, and more. *God is Love*—the only harmonizing and protecting power. There is a sense of security and peace in this moonlit scene which makes one feel that, consciously, we can be near to God, and that while so conscious, no harm can befall."

"Then how glorious it would be if man were

always so conscious of the presence of God."

"Yes, Mr. Halevi. It would mean unlocking the gates of Paradise."

"The great pity is that the gates of Paradise and purgatory are so close together. In one hour the scene may change, and storms, furious and destructive, sweep the land. Where would your type be then, Frau Wagner?"

"'Tis not the change that is the type, 'tis the beauty. The beauty has not changed—a veil has been drawn before it, according to our conception."

"You think then that objects are not what they seem to be of themselves, but are subjective. A rather novel idea, and one furnishing food for thought."

"This I believe to be true only of material things. As to spiritual things, they are truths and never vary. But they may only be perceived through spiritual discernment, and an intelligent realization of their unity or oneness with the unchangeable whole."

"This is interesting. May we continue the subject at another time? Mother, I believe you are ready for indoors, and one wee song before retiring."

It was nine o'clock when the party broke up; and Ezra was left to smoke a pipe until he should be rejoined by Leah.

At the door of Miriam's room, she held out her hand to bid her guest good-night; but Frau Betty asked permission to remain for awhile and chat, declaring in answer to Miriam's solicitations, that she was not at all fatigued by the day's experiences, and would much prefer that the matter so near their hearts be decided before another day should dawn. So after Leah had made things comfortable, she left them together, believing rightly that so there would be less restraint; and with a kiss to each, and promising to tell Susan to listen for Milady's bell, she went down to Ezra.

"You are early, Leah. Has mother retired so soon?"

"No, dear, but she chased me away; said you sounded lonesome down here, and she would spend half an hour or so with Frau Betty, and then call Susan to attend her."

"An unusual woman, this Frau Betty of yours, Leah. She seems to have a very strong hold on the pleasant aspect of things."

"Yes, and she believes that aspect the only real one."

"Well, the aspect of having you at my side for an extra hour is very pleasant at all events, and so I hope it is real, little wife."

They strolled through the garden arm in arm, for an hour or more, Ezra full of spirits

and ready laughter, though Leah left most of the talking for him to do. She was trying so hard not to believe she knew what was taking place in Milady's room, and inwardly praying that Ezra's period of ignorance might not be protracted. She was so sure he would be happy to know of and investigate with them, this beautiful new religion which turned everything into joy and gladness. How selfish to keep it from him even an instant. But there—she had promised, and would soon be released now. They went into the house and up to their apartments at last, Leah peeping in at Milady's door on the way, to see in the dim light, her form outlined on the bed, and surrounded to Leah's faithful eyes, with a halo of peace and hopeful calm.

XIII

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

WHAT had occurred in Miriam's room last night, the night which was to stand out in her consciousness as perhaps the most important one of her life? A simple thing. Frau Betty had given her thought a fresh impetus God-ward. The promise from Isaiah which was such a favorite with Miriam, Frau Betty had declared to be literal. She would interpret it in no other way, and Miriam believed her when she said:

"We may not believe that God is able to heal sin and unable to cope with disease. It were sacrilegious to so limit Him, and worse than inconsistent, for we profess to believe He is omnipotence."

"But may He not have sent this affliction as punishment for some sin on my part."

"That would be less merciful than you, as a human parent, would be to your child. No. Besides, the only sin is the worship of other gods than the one infinite Good. You have

been positive that sight was physical, and situated in the eye, while in reality, Mind, and Mind alone, is the source of all light and perception."

"You mean then, that I have believed that matter has power of itself, and so have taken away in my own thought, some of the power belonging to Deity?"

"Exactly. And in order to benefit by the power of Good, we must mentally give up allegiance to the false power, and place ourselves unreservedly under the direction or force of infinite Love, which is God, and therefore unlimited."

"How am I to do this, Frau Betty?"

"Has not Leah told you of the manner of mental treatment?"

"Yes, and I am eager to share her experience. Will you not exercise this beautiful faith in my behalf?"

"Willingly, dear Madam Halevi. 'Tis why I came. *Ach, kind weisst du nicht, dass Gott ist Liebe?* We must reflect this Love, or we are no children of His. Let us begin at once. The treatment is purely mental, and I shall ask you only to think of yourself as a perfect child of God, who loves and will heal you when you come to Him in faith, and knowing He has already given you all good."

So, on this night, and each morning and night for the next two weeks, the treatments were continued. The first relief came to Miriam, in a lifting of the rebellious condition. Her mind became placid and assured. The expectation of receiving her sight was so positive that even impatience took wing. What matter when? Now that she knew herself to be dreaming, the awakening could come when it may. Her Father was calling her this time, and was waking her gently. So gently, that when one morning He told her by the daylight coming in at the window, that it was time to arise, her obedience followed in silent, prayerful wonder. She arose and looked, and surely *this* was no dream. *She saw!*

"Oh, God! Let me not doubt Thee now. I do see. This is the glory of Thy presence flooding the room, and Thou hast bid me stand in it. In Thy merciful love, keep me conscious of this wonderful reality until at least I see my children's faces, just once—just once, dear heavenly Father—then will I yield myself wholly to Thy will. But oh, I can only believe henceforth that Thy will is to provide all good, and only good, for Thy children."

And Miriam fell on her knees by the bed and buried her face in the clothes. She must not see any object before her Ezra's face. That

must be the first object which her mother-eyes should rest upon in this new and glorious world into which she was about to enter. She stretched a hand and pulled the bell-cord which always hung over the head of her bed, and communicated with a bell in Susan's room. It was early, and not even Leah was stirring. Susan entered her mistress' presence only half awake. She made an exclamation at sight of her mistress in this unusual position, and stepped forward hastily to lift her up. But Miriam held up her hand.

"No, Susan, do not touch me. Go to Mr. Halevi's room and ask him to come to me at once. Pass Mrs. Halevi's door gently, so as not to awaken her."

Ezra came almost immediately.

"Mother, precious Mother. What is it?"

"Ezra, son, lift me in your arms and take me to the window. Now," as his strong arms did her bidding, "place me with my back to the window, and stand yourself, facing me."

Ezra followed her directions in a maze of wonderment. He had no time to formulate any question however, for Miriam continued:

"Now, my boy, make ready. Look me in the face."

She opened her eyes and looked straight into the gaze of filial love and tenderness

which before had made themselves familiar to her through all the senses but the one now serving her so well. The love she saw there was truly at this moment tinged with anxiety—but oh, so beautiful! She answered his question before he put it:

"My boy, my Ezra, *I see you!*"

"Good God, what does this mean? Mother, do you know what you are saying?"

For a moment that poor fellow feared his mother's strong desire for sight had turned her mad. Only for a moment though. She turned him around and herself faced the light.

"Look into my eyes, Ezra. Do they dilate?"

And yes, the pupils which had remained wide open for so many years, at once contracted as the strong sunlight touched them. Ezra gathered her in his arms and a great sob rent his bosom.

"Beloved Mother. God alone could have done this thing. Let us offer at once to Him, a prayer of gratitude."

"The Book, Ezra. Give us the Book." And, as his hand reached out for the Bible, a copy of which was found in each room of the house, "Find for me the forty-second chapter of Isaiah, and let *me* read it to you."

He handed her the Book open at the place, and without hesitation, and quite as though

her eyes had never become unaccustomed to print, she read: "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." She closed the Book.

"He has fulfilled His promise, Ezra. Let us thank Him on our knees."

She pulled him down—this strong Jewish man, who had never yet bent the knee before his Maker—and humbly and gratefully together they repeated that prayer of prayers for the Jew, The Shema':

"*Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be the name of the glory of His Kingdom forever and ever.*"

Ezra bowed his head to receive her blessing, and now they seemed to change places.

His occupation was gone; she took the lead; he stood amazed and helpless before her.

"Come, Ezra, let us go to Leah."

He placed his hand in her outstretched one, and let her lead him through the open door, and actually right into Leah's room, and up to her bedside, before he could collect himself or at all sense the reality of the experience through which he was passing. The sight of his beautiful young wife sleeping so calmly on

her pillow aroused him, and he quickly said:

"Let us not startle her, beloved. Had I not better wake and tell her about it first?"

"No, son, Leah will not be startled. She is expecting this."

And before Ezra could even wonder what she meant, Leah opened her eyes and saw them. In an instant she realized what had taken place, and with a glad little cry, she was on her feet, and had Milady in her arms.

"*Oh, thank God! Thank God for all His wondrous goodness to the children of men.*"

Ezra threw a dressing-gown about her, and they sat together once more, as an artist might have painted them. Then these two—who were more to Ezra than his life—told him of the wonderful means by which this miracle was performed. Strange to say, his heart was so overflowing with gratitude at the fact itself, that his ear hardly caught the words of explanation, so that no protest arose to cloud this first day of wondrous joy.

Now Frau Betty must be told. Miriam would go to her. Ezra stepped forward to offer his arm, but no, Miriam would go alone. And it was with a sense of awe and wonder that the two beheld this erstwhile dependent mother, with this new confident and certain air.

"The strangest part of it is that she seems

never to have been blind. Watch her, Leah. She seems so at home in the long corridor, and even knows the position of Frau Betty's room. Now she places her hand on the very door-knob. Why, we could not do better than she, Leah."

"Indeed, Ezra, the truth has made her every whit whole. Her confidence is perfect because it is now rightly placed."

As Leah uttered these words her young face was illumined with a religious fervor Ezra had never seen there before; and in her voice as she spoke, was a reverence in strong contrast with her previous devotional utterances. Ezra had never found fault with these utterances before. They had seemed sufficiently whole-souled and sincere, but the new note of positiveness startled him. He looked at her face sharply.

"And has it not always been rightly placed, Leah? Our mother has always worshipped God."

"Yes, but through the medium of matter only. Now she begins to understand Him as Mind."

"What a little theologian you have become, Leah. But let us hurry and get ready for breakfast. I shall not go to town on this heaven-sent day. Oh, little wife, my mother

has never before seen my face. Can you know how she must want to study it to her fill! She shall see it today to her heart's content."

Meanwhile Miriam had rapped at Frau Betty's door and been admitted. Frau Betty was putting the finishing touches to her morning toilet. She turned as Miriam entered, and took in conditions at a glance. She uttered an exclamation, and the next moment the two women were locked in each other's embrace. No words were needed to tell the glad tidings, so Miriam, womanlike, wept out her joy on her friend's bosom.

"*Ach, kind weisst du nicht, dass Gott ist Liebe?*"

Little more was said, but a bond of sisterhood and friendship was here sealed, and never broken throughout all the years to come.

At breakfast Frau Betty declared her intention of leaving them. She had been persuaded to remain longer than she originally intended, but now had work to do elsewhere.

"We practitioners are busy people, Mr. Halevi," she said in answer to Ezra's earnest invitation to remain longer with them; "with very little time for play. For the present my work here is ended, but it will give me pleasure to be asked to come and see you later in the year."

Ezra was somewhat puzzled as to what the "work" referred to by Frau Betty could have been, but politeness restrained him from inquiring. He had been so dazed when Miriam and Leah had spoken to him about it in the morning, that he had not taken in the significance of Frau Betty's part in the occurrence. He now assured her of a warm welcome whenever she found it possible to visit them, and left the room to see that the trap was made ready to take her to the station.

"Frau Betty, you spoke of yourself as a practitioner. Have you left Miss Worden's school, or do you practice there?" Leah asked when Ezra had left them.

"It has been sometime now since I have felt drawn to this work, Leah, and the healing of your voice gave strong impetus to my inclination to leave everything else and be about my Father's business. Now, with your dear mother's restoration, I can no longer doubt the leading of divine Love, and I shall not return to school this fall, but open an office in the city, for the practice of Christian Science healing."

"Will it ever be possible for us to repay you for all you have done for us?"

"Dear child, you have more than repaid me already, by providing the opportunity for

serving my master. To turn one soul to the light of truth, is more than sufficient compensation for any tribulation experienced in learning the way oneself. No, you owe me nothing, but to love one another, even as God loveth us."

This was Frau Betty's good-by. She would not hear of breaking up this happy family party even for the short time it would have taken Ezra to drive her to the station; so Tom took the reins, and the trio watched her from the rose-garden, and waved a farewell as long as the carriage could be seen down the road.

Now, how to spend this happy day. For Miriam the world had begun anew. She was "born again", a new creature indeed, and like a child entering an unfamiliar place full of curiosities, she wanted to see it all at once. No indoors for her today. She had been shut in long enough. Freedom! Freedom to worship God through this new medium, was what she craved. She must look upon nature, the work of His hands, and drink in its beauty with this new, heavenly sense of its permanence.

So she would away to Nook Comfort, and today both of her children should accompany her. Not for an instant did she want them out of her sight for this whole wonderful day—this day that was to be devoted to outdoor thanksgiving to God. And they let her take

the lead. It came so naturally to her now that her bonds were loosed. Down to the boat-house she walked, a little in advance of them, and helped Ezra get the boat ready, while Leah telephoned up to the house for luncheon to be served at Nook Comfort at noon.

Such a trip, with Miriam at the rudder, and Leah and Ezra facing her at the oars! Miriam steered straight and true, and Ezra was more and more amazed at her accuracy.

"How remarkable!" his glance said many times to Leah, who would smile back responsively, though with an undefinable air of its all seeming perfectly natural to her.

When they reached Nook Comfort, Miriam became indefatigable. A certain excitement was upon her, as though she feared to lose time. She went through all the rooms of the bungalow, rearranging the furniture, and placing the flowers they had plucked on the way up from the shore, in vases on the tables and mantle pieces. Ezra feared she would exhaust herself, and at last Leah too, suggested to her the unwisdom of overdoing. "Let us stand still awhile, darling Mother, and see the glory of God," she coaxed, and then Miriam consented to relax. So they passed the rest of the time before luncheon on the broad veranda of the bungalow, speaking in grateful tones of the

wonderful present, and the already-become dreamlike past.

After luncheon they wandered in the fragrant woods around the Nook, and Miriam became familiar through sight, with all which she had hitherto known and loved through sound only. The buzzing of the bees was hushed in the more wonderful vision of them on the glass door of their hive, trampling their little yellow bodies one over the other in a grand apparent mix-up. The cooing of the doves in the cote, Miriam scarcely heard, for the seeing of the beautiful ring-necked creatures on the outside floating down to the ground and up again on outspread wing. In following the flight of the humming-bird in the honeysuckle vine on this old tree, Miriam's eyes faced the sun, and Ezra marvelled at the fearlessness of her looking. "Why," he thought, "had there been an operation performed on those eyes, she had not dared even to face the rays, and now she gazes at the body!"

But though he wondered, he could not somehow, feel anxious, for she seemed so assured herself. As they went farther into the woods and left the little colony of domesticated creatures behind—creatures that Miriam had always loved to gather near her—the shadows became grateful, and the morning-glories

delighted her most. True they had no fragrance, but she had always been able to smell. And these beautiful things—what a delight to see them! Where the shade was deepest, the sun had not penetrated, and actually, some of the blossoms had remained open, the dew-drops still upon them, offering her a welcome with a tear of joy in each cup. She would not pluck a single one. She had touched them before, now she only wanted to see, *see*, SEE them!

So the hours wore on, and at length this, what Miriam called afterwards, her "purely selfish day", passed toward evening. It was the Sabbath eve, and this took them home a little earlier. The Sabbath lamps were to be lighted, and the prayers to be read. Here Ezra, as the head of the family, again took the lead. With hat and Taleth on, he stood facing the east, the point of the sun-rising, and at the proper place in the service, read the Hagomel, or prayer of thanksgiving for the recovery of the sick or saved from the effects of accident. Miriam performed her part in this peculiar prayer or ceremony, and after the "Adon O Lam" was sung by them all, they retired, and sleep soon soothed the happy weariness of this red-letter day in all their lives.

XIV

EZRA GOES AWAY

How may an author write but with regret, of the "little rift within the lute", when its "widening" must mean the "making mute" of the "music" of lives, the harmony of which, he has delighted to portray! But certain it is, that if the harmony of the most perfect human relation be not based upon an understanding of oneness with the source or principle of all harmony, there can be no guarantee of continuance; "for order is heaven's first law," and life, when governed other than by the principle or rule of universal Good, becomes disorderly, or out of order, and so subject to constant change.

Of course the contrary is equally true. It was in trying to make Ezra see the latter that Miriam became conscious for the first time in his life, of a quality in Ezra which had hitherto lain unsuspected.

An interval of blissful enjoyment of, and happy adjustment to new conditions, consequent

on the healing of Miriam's blindness followed; and in after days Leah could never understand how it was that Ezra had not seemed to assimilate the fact that Milady and herself constantly reiterated their gratitude, for this healing, to a religious system. They called it Christian Science, and were fully persuaded that together with themselves, the joy in the demonstration had been great enough to destroy in his thought, all the natural reluctance of a Jew to acknowledge that any good thing could come out of Galilee, or through her great prophet. But Ezra had begun to chafe inwardly at the frequent mention of this name. He only refrained from expressing dissatisfaction for fear of disturbing his mother's new-found happiness. A couple of weeks after Frau Betty went away he said to Leah:

"Leah, what is this Christian Science which seems to occupy so much of your thought? Both you and mother seem to give it the credit for the restoration of her sight."

"Why, Ezra, have you been so busy in the great world outside, that you have not heard the good news which, it seems to me, is being told everywhere, that the great secret of the power of the man Jesus to perform what has been called his miracles, has been rediscovered and applied to discordant human conditions

today with the result that the same 'miracles' follow now as then? This discovery has been named by the discoverer, 'Christian Science,' the word 'Christ' being interpreted by her to mean truth, and science we know to be all knowledge; hence Christian Science means literally, the knowledge of truth."

Ezra looked at her in amazement.

'Why, darling," he said, "where did you get your wisdom? But you know the word 'Christ' is an offence. That which is called 'Christian', must have to do with Christ Jesus, and how may a Jew accept such inference as yours?"

"Ah, husband, this new religion does not point to a man, but to the *teachings* of an inspired prophet, as the savior of humanity. Mother and I are going to have a little reading on the subject presently; won't you join us, and learn from the Book, what I can but imperfectly tell you?"

She looked so sweet and pleading, that the clouds could not but lift from Ezra's heart and mind. "If this is folly, I shall love her out of it. 'Tis but a bit of womanishness to ape the fads of the day," he thought, as he took her in his arms, and consented with a kiss.

How happy she was, this sweet little woman, with her husband's strong arms around her.

Together they went indoors, his embrace in no way relaxed, so that had he not held her up, she might have tripped against his feet. Don't shorten this embrace, dear young couple. It is to be the last you shall know for many a sad day to come.

The days were beginning to shorten, and John was lighting the lamps as the two entered Milady's presence. Ezra spoke: "Mother, Leah has asked me to join you in your reading this evening. I am at least curious to know just what it is you have been so busily studying together, for I am just awakening to the fact that you have been studying."

With his one arm still about Leah, he drew a chair up to the hearth, where Miriam, in anticipation of Leah's invitation and Ezra's acceptance, had already placed a small table, and arranged her books upon it. With his free hand, Ezra rolled a settee near his mother's chair, and he and Leah occupied it together. There were two brown pamphlets on the table, one of which Miriam handed to Leah, and the other she placed in an upright stand on the table, before herself, pushing the big Bible towards Ezra.

It so happened that the subject of the "Lesson Sermon," as Miriam announced it from the pages of the "Christian Science Quarterly

Bible Lessons," as Ezra read the title on the cover of the brown pamphlet, was Love. The Golden Text: "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God." Then came verses from the Bible, which were read responsively by Miriam, Leah, and now Ezra; these verses were strangely enough, all quoted from the Old Testament. Then references followed, which comprised the sermon proper, and were read in sections, alternately from the Bible and from the Christian Science text-book, "Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures," by Mary Baker Eddy. These references were taken wholly, until they reached the section before the last, from the Old Testament, so that Ezra could cavil at nothing until these final sections were reached. Then was brought out gloriously the fact that it was Love, divine Love alone which had enabled the man, Jesus, to accomplish his mighty works: to heal the sick, to open blind eyes, to unstop deaf ears, to make the lame to walk, to forgive sins by destroying them in their foundation, —namely thought—to walk the waves, and to raise the dead; halting not at the restoration of Lazarus, but in his own case, proving the power of life over death, of mind over matter, and, crown of all, of love over hate—when on the cross where hatred pinned him, he prayed:

"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It seems incredible that a man of Ezra's years and intellect, even though a Jew, had never read the wondrous story of Jesus and his passion; but so it was. Ezra had walked in a narrow and bigoted way where religion was concerned, and now this sudden influx of information regarding the world's greatest incident, dazed, blinded and unaccountably enraged him. His arm dropped from Leah's shoulder, and he arose. Leah was herself so enraptured with the wonderful beauty of this ever new-old tale, that she did not perceive Ezra's agitation, or if she did, attributed it to exaltation like unto her own. So when Ezra excused himself and said he would take a turn outside while his mother retired for the night, she fully sympathized with his desire to be alone in this first ecstasy of the revelation. The mother-heart had read differently, and very pitifully she felt for the trusting young wife, whose faith and loyalty were soon to be put to severe test.

The next morning was the one which ushered in our story. It will be remembered that Leah had gone alone for her morning swim, which Ezra had forsworn for the last week or so, on account of the chill of the air. Ezra had left

them at the breakfast-table and gone off to work the problem out, in the open air. When we retrospected, he had just reached the conclusion that Leah would be unfitted for the duties of Jewish motherhood unless she renounced this sudden and fanatical belief of Christ as the Messiah.

"I will plead with her, and surely my love will find a way to convince her of her fatal mistake. If not, she shall at least obey me, and promise to give up this unwise study or perusal of a subject so detrimental to our happiness."

He clenched his hands and set his jaw, and here, as for the first time in his life, the possibility of opposition from the two who had been wont to regard his word as law, dawned upon him; the slumbering imp of obstinacy awoke in him, and assailed even his affection sorely. He decided then and there to remain at home today, and settle the question once for all. "Leah should choose between him and Christ." Oh, the pathos of this repetition! Will the ages never tire of crucifixion? In the heat of his decision he turned his steps homeward, and entering the house, broke into his mother's room with the scantest ceremony he had ever used.

"Mother," he exclaimed, "I must speak with

you. Be kind enough to believe that I am very much determined to put an end to this folly, so far as Leah is concerned, at least, and I shall ask that you no longer encourage her to dwell on a subject which may result in a rupture between us. Leah is too young to understand these deep things of life, and if she were not, she must still be content to be guided by her husband in the matter of religion. I am by no means so anxious as you both appear to have suddenly become, to renounce my faith in the one God, and His all-sufficient law, as handed down to us by Moses. I need no mediator between my God and me; and I now request that these books and this fad be laid aside together. I shall instruct Leah to this effect, immediately."

Miriam was so astonished that for a moment she could not speak. She recovered herself however, as Ezra turned on his heel to leave the room. She placed a detaining hand on his arm, which he almost shook off, but turned and faced his mother once more.

"Well, Mother?" he questioned.

"Ezra, it is well that I know this is not you; that I have learned to separate error from my concept of God's child; otherwise I should order you from my presence. You have forgotten yourself, for the first time in your life."

Ezra bit his lip. "Please pardon me, Mother. I do not wish to be rude, but I feel most deeply on this subject; so deeply in fact, that I must brave your displeasure and say that I am quite determined to put a stop to it. I will see Leah at once, and exact a promise from her, and if she give it not, she shall still obey me."

He left the room and Miriam seated herself in her easy chair near the window, and soliloquized thus:

"How very strange! God indeed 'works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.' Who would have believed that my boy was possessed of this hidden sin—the sin of self-will, of pride, of self-righteousness? Truly, 'there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed,' and our blessed truth teaches that in order to be overcome or destroyed, error must first be uncovered. We shall have to love him all the more, and lead him gently to the light. Yes. He is God's child, and this fact does not lessen but enhances my mother-love, for it takes away my fears for him. He may have to suffer in the process, but chastened and purified he will be. My poor Leah! The time of her testing is at hand. But divine Love will guide and uphold her, for hath He not promised to 'give his angels charge over thee'?"

Then her mood became reminiscent, and

she thought of the dear days of her own young courtship and her fond young lover, and his anguish at the sudden calamity which had overtaken them, and the joy he would have felt had he been able to bring this wonderful healing truth to her. Would he have rejected it because it had been the teaching of Jesus, or would he have remembered that of all Jews, Jesus had been the greatest? At all events, she could not believe that hidebound tradition and bigotry could have come between him and his gratitude to any power which had performed this marvelous miracle of restoring her sight. He would have known it must be of God, and so only Good.

So she sat and mused on the past until suddenly brought to a sense of the present by the sound of a moan coming from the direction of Leah's room—a moan as of a human soul in extremis. She started to her feet under the impulsion to run to her darling Leah, but for the first time felt it would be an intrusion in Ezra's sight for his mother to enter his room uninvited. She forced herself to composure, and began at once to work mentally for the peace and harmony of her household and her loved ones. Let us leave her to her labor of love, and follow Ezra as he made his way to his wife's room.

Hardly waiting a moment for an answer to his knock, he turned the door-knob and entered the room. Leah was engaged with some dainty work, and sat right in the rays of the sun as it streamed into the wide open window. It shone upon her fair head, which gleamed like gold under the refiner's hand.

"Is that you, Ezra? I am glad you have come, dear. Are you taking a holiday today?" And she held out a hand to him. He did not take it, and as Leah would have risen in surprise, he bid her to remain seated, and drew a chair close for himself. He lost no time in opening his subject. Leah had expected that soon he would speak of his impressions to her, but she was wholly unprepared for the outburst that now took place.

"Leah, I have come to ask you to give up this foolish delusion into which you have fallen, and make up your mind to be guided by me in your religious devotions. Surely our fathers' God is sufficient for a Jewish woman to worship. Why need you have a fetish of this kind?"

"A fetish, Ezra? Would you call that a fetish which has proven itself a fact? Why, husband, what has come over you?"

"In what way has the Messiahship of Christ become a fact? You cannot entertain such a

belief and be a Jewess. As a Jew, and your husband, I must demand that you put aside this theory, and turn again to the true religion of your fathers. Leah," and for a second his voice was pleading, "you know that I am—set, if you will, in my ideas of the duties and obligations of our race. You know also that I attach special importance to my name, and have felt it incumbent to pattern my thoughts and life after those of the great Jew for whom I was named. You may think this is not a Jewish demand, but it has been my own demand of myself, and I can see no other right conclusion. My father and mother named me 'Ezra,' and thus laid me under an obligation which I am bound to respect. Ezra of old, a lawgiver in Israel, divorced the sons of Israel from the women of other nations with whom they intermarried. This binds me to marriage with only a woman of Israel. How can I retain for wife one who has strayed after other gods?"

He arose in agitation and paced the floor. For a few minutes Leah did not reply. She was thinking how splendid was this fidelity to a peculiar idea, and what promise it held out for a similar loyalty to truth when Ezra should have recognized the truth in this beautiful new-old teaching. Her conviction was so

strong that her explanation would enlighten him, that her gentle heart beat not one iota faster, and her usual sweet calm was in no way ruffled.

"Dear husband," at last she said, as she arose and went towards him, "believe me. For the first time in my life, *I now know there is but one God.* You and I have unconsciously been believing in two; one loving, the other wrathful; one just, the other jealous; one to be loved, the other to be feared; or at all events, we have ascribed a dual nature to a being of oneness, and have held this dual being responsible for all the ills, as well as the good, with which human life is beset. I do not believe this was the teaching of primitive Judaism, but of a later misconception of God's law. The man Jesus, who sought to restore the primitive purity of our holy faith, and proved his theories of God's perfect nature by demonstrating God's law—that is, in proving it supreme in overcoming bodily ills as well as the sins of mankind—may well be esteemed the Messiah, or savior of humanity, may he not?"

Leah was inspired. How could her upliftedness at this moment, when she acknowledged in her husband's presence her allegiance to the Christ, have failed to reach Ezra's ken?

But so blinded was he with his own sense of outraged authority, and greater wisdom, that he did not feel the inspiration of the moment, and rudely brought Leah back to earth. Making a quick step forward, he roughly took her wrist in his hand.

"Be done! Be done, sacrilegious girl!" he cried.

Leah turned large wondering eyes upon him.

"Not sacrilegious, husband, but humble, grateful, loving and appreciative as I have never been before. Let me tell you my first experience of the healing power of divine Mind. I have kept this tale to tell you at a right moment. My voice, Ezra, that you love so dearly—does it lack in power or sweetness, or any quality of appeal to you?"

For the moment Ezra was charmed out of his material selfhood.

"No, beloved," he said, "on the contrary, there has entered into it a note of heaven."

"'Tis just that, Ezra, a 'note of heaven,' or eternal harmony. Well, 'tis to this truth I owe it."

And somehow the halo of purity and truth which surrounded Leah as she related her experience at the school, held Ezra spellbound, and not once did he question or even interrupt

her. Her tale told, she stood before him, her soul in her expectant eyes. Surely now he must be convinced. Her whole form expressed her own conviction on this point. How cruel human love can be! In this is shown the difference between it and the divine. Actuated by the latter, Jesus on the cross pleaded for those who had betrayed and crucified him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Even then would he have had them saved from the inevitable penalty of their culminating sin himward, and so worldward. But Ezra, who had promised to love and cherish this almost unearthly bit of lovely womanhood, now turned and practically slew her because of her glorified acceptance of a great truth.

Shaking himself loose from the spell of her almost transparent beauty, and the loved tones of her voice, he cried:

"Not one word, not one word do I believe, Leah. God may have such power, but not Christ."

"The God-principle is Christ, Ezra."

"Stop, stop!" he thundered. "Hear me now, and know that my decision is unalterable. You will find my vindication in the ninth and tenth chapters of the book of Ezra, which you may ponder after I am gone. For as God is my judge, I must put you away unless you

renounce this renegadism and return to your proper place as a daughter of Israel. Never shall child of mine call a renegade, 'mother.'"

Ah, how little he knew the sweet secret, which had barely as yet been revealed to Leah!

"I cannot, oh I cannot, Ezra, unbelieve, even at your dear command. The demands of God are higher than those of man. But I wish to obey you as far as is in my power, so I shall promise if you will, to speak no more of this in your presence, nor to study it from books. But I cannot let you believe I shall find it possible to put it out of my heart and mind, for this is not mine to promise. Life indeed would end with such explusions, for I cannot unlearn the great fact that the mental power of the Christ or Truth, is the Messiah, and that Messiah is come!"

With a snarl of rage, he raised his hands as a barrier between them. She had been about to approach him.

"No. Come not near me, faithless woman. You shall choose this instant between your Christ and your husband. Quick! At once decide!"

She bowed her head. "The decision is not mine, but God's," she murmured. "I cannot give up my Christ."

"Then farewell, and God shall punish you, *renegade.*" And here it was that Miriam heard the moan with which Leah slipped to the floor as Ezra dashed out of the room and from the house.

Miriam waited breathless until the noise of his rushing through the hall, down the stairs and out of the front door had ceased, then hurried to Leah's room and gathered the precious huddled heap into her arms, where she held her close without speaking, until her paroxysm of anguish was over. Then Leah raised an arm, and putting it about Miriam's neck, drew her head down, and whispered:

"Oh, Mother, Mother, what shall we do?"

"Ah, dear child, let us not forget that God is Love. Now is the time to prove it. Our Shepherd will show us how to go, if we but trust. Let us sing one verse of the sweet song of promise." And softly together they sang brokenly, from that dearest of hymns to the true Christian Scientist, namely, "Christ, My Refuge."

What sweet magic in this beloved hymn of our beloved Leader! What is it back of the words which gives it its potency for good? Surely the thought from which it emanated must be attuned to the divine harmonies. The words must have been heard by her as sung by

the heavenly choir. How else could they fulfil the mission of comfort so well? They are the message of a risen heart, to a heart that would rise, and never where loved and understood, have they failed to uplift and sustain. There was no exception in this case, as the heaven-born words ceased, their work was accomplished, and Miriam and Leah arose to their feet with new hope and courage, and we, feeling them to be engrounded in a superb faith in the supremacy of good, must leave them for a space, and follow our misguided hero in his flight.

XV

A FRIEND IN NEED

EZRA sped down the front steps, around the path, and through the rose-garden to the road, his thoughts filled with resentful rage.

"How dare she, how dare she!" they run. "To think that she could be stubborn and brave her husband's displeasure in this way!"

How little did Ezra realize that the stubbornness was in himself, and not in Leah. nor his mother. If he had recognized this quality in his own thought, he would have placed the responsibility for it upon circumstances. But you may be very sure that circumstances do not create character or disposition, but disposition and character do bring about the very circumstances, which, when these, disposition and character, are manifested harmoniously or otherwise, seem to have been brought about by circumstances. So we see that Ezra, formerly gentle and persuasive, is now tyrannical and unjust. These qualities have only lain dormant

in his consciousness. Had they not been there at all, the circumstances which they brought about, could never have occurred. Ezra did not then see that this separation between himself and his dear ones had been caused by these qualities in himself, and not by the fact of Leah's acceptance of a doctrine out of keeping with his own views on theology.

Ezra had not called for any conveyance from the stables, but started down the road on foot. As he came near uncle Jerry's place, he saw the old man leaning on the gate very much as he had found him the day he asked about the ownership of Rosemount. Uncle Jerry raised himself and his cap together.

"Good-day, Judge," he said. "Are you looking for me, sir?"

Ezra had not been looking for uncle Jerry, but now it occurred to him that it might be wise to give uncle Jerry an inkling of his intention, and engage his attention to the possible needs of the two at home, so he said:

"Uncle Jerry, I am going away; it may be for some time. While I am gone I want you and Mary to see as much as possible of my mother and wife, and have a care for their comfort and well-being. If there is anything in the accounts you would refer to me, write to Mr. Bryant, with whom I shall leave in-

structions. And Jerry, you must promise to write me at least once a month as to the welfare of those up to the house, and immediately if anything goes wrong with them. I shall send you an address to which you may direct your letters."

Uncle Jerry had not grown his gray hairs in inexperience of the world and its ways, and now he knew that all was not well with his dear "Judge," as he had called Ezra since the day he had secured his little home to him and his forever. Ezra had made him steward, or caretaker of Rosemount, and in their dealings together, a real affection for each other had developed. Now this old man ventured to lay a kindly hand on Ezra's arm as he said:

"Judge, pardon an old man's questioning. Is anything gone wrong with you? You know I would give everything I have and am, for your sake, and the ladies at the house."

And then followed one of those strange moments, in which real human sympathy levels class distinction, and Ezra found himself unburdening his thought to this kind old friend.

"Uncle Jerry," he said, "you know that I am a Jew. Do you think I would be justified in permitting my wife to become a Christian, and so perhaps bring children into the world

who would be torn, in choosing their religion, between their love for either parent, and a possible predilection for the religion of either? I must go before such a thing becomes possible. Mrs. Halevi has declared to me that she must accept the religion of Christ, because she believes it to have cured my mother's blindness. Such blind fanaticism I cannot and will not permit, and I have given her the choice between it and me, and uncle Jerry," with a catching of the breath that was almost a sob, "she has chosen it. How can I stay and see this? I must go, and perhaps she will recognize her mistake and accede to my demand that she abjure this folly forever."

"Ah, dear master, how do you know it is folly? Madam and Mrs. Halevi are not two who could be easily deluded, or led into such a thing foolishly. Don't make a mistake that may cause you endless regret. Think how this will appear to your world, and what your dear ones must suffer. Could you not stay by and lead them gently to your way, if indeed their way prove not the better?"

Ezra looked at the old man for a moment in dumb reproach. Then:

"You too, Jerry? Have they been filling your mind with this infernal rubbish? However that may be, I am bound by my name,

and must live up to its demands. No more now. No, I cannot speak of it any more. Take care of them, Jerry, and when she writes me to come, it will be because I may, in honor. Good-by, old friend." And shaking hands warmly with Jerry, he bowed his head to Jerry's murmured blessing and was gone.

Yes, gone from home, but not from the scene of his troubles, for that is always in one's own consciousness, and he could as easily have risen above or overcome them where they found him, as in any place wherein he might seek surcease. But this of course, he did not know, so as he went, his thoughts ran riot, and by the time he caught the train and was well on the way to his office, he had fully made up his mind that the matter was irrevocable.

Arriving at his place of business, he retired to his private room, and there, after looking over the correspondence on his desk, he pushed it aside in a bunch, with the exception of one letter, with which open in his hand, he leaned back in his chair and tried to clear the cobwebs from his "tired brain." This letter he read and reread. It seemed to offer a suggestion for his next step; but at the same time concentrating his thoughts on the suggestion was difficult. His thoughts would travel homeward—to the supplicating form of his tender

little wife, to whom he had never been harsh before. Surely his present severity was justified. She had all but defied him. And his mother, so suddenly become independent of him! He missed the blind adoration and meek submission to which he had been accustomed from his two gentle women-folk. Ezra had not known that he was opposed to the emancipation of woman, because the problem had never come home to him. He tried to argue with himself that the only freedom which he could not grant woman was in religious tolerance. But as his mother and wife had never opposed him on any other ground, he was hardly a fair judge of his own powers of liberalism.

The letter in question was from an old college chum. Ezra had made friends easily at college, but there was only one to whom he became closely attached. This was Peter Carillon, a young man who was to study for the ministry at the close of his college course. He took his degree one year earlier than Ezra, and left for England, to attend a famous Jewish theological seminary. He entered upon a four years course of hard work, expecting at the end of the time to take orders as a Jewish rabbi. Since Ezra's marriage he had rather neglected his correspondence with this friend, and so had no knowledge of his intention to

visit the States. His letter, Ezra read again as follows:

Hotel Victoria, New York.

Dear Old Pal:—

I arrived here from across the Big Pond, day before yesterday, and have called twice at your office without seeing you. Can you give an old chum an hour of your time this evening, or have you become a benedict? Never mind letting me know, just come. I'll wait for you till six o'clock. Am off for a trip to the Sunny South, in a day or two, so do come.

Ever yours,

P. C.

It was this last sentence in the letter which offered the suggestion to Ezra. He decided to meet his friend, and as the clock struck the half hour after five, he placed the letter in his pocket and left the office.

He found the "Rabbi," as Carillon had been familiarly dubbed by his college associates, eagerly awaiting him. They greeted each other warmly, and were soon deep in the usual first questions of friends meeting after long absence. When these questions were satisfied, Ezra inquired:

"And now, old friend, what is the trip about, and where?"

"Well, the fact is old man that I need a change. Too much theology and not enough spirituality is my grievance. The air of the Seminary is thick with dogma; and before returning, I thought I would finish up the vacation with a run down into Louisiana; look a bit after my father's property there; and incidentally study the natives at close range, for you know, my future field of work lies there. I suppose you could not be spared from home for a short outing?"

Carillon had no idea his suggestion would be considered. He really had meant only to chaff Ezra a bit. So he was astonished when Ezra answered:

"Why, I should like it, of all things, at this moment."

Peter scanned his friend's face. "Something gone wrong here?" he questioned to himself. Aloud he said: "Well, 'of all things' I would like it too."

"When do we start?"

"Steamer leaves Tuesday morning. This is Saturday. Plenty of time to introduce me to your wife and mother."

"Can't do it this time, old man. I said good-by to them this morning for some time to come. I shall spend Monday arranging with my lawyer for their interests while I am away,

and getting things in order at the office, so that my absence will make as little difference as possible."

"Well then, let us dine and go to the theatre afterwards."

XVI

ON SHIPBOARD

THE steamship Mersey sailed early Tuesday morning, and an hour later found our friends promenading the upper deck, and enjoying the delightful early autumn breezes. The ship was bound for New Orleans, and a pleasant trip of four days with ideal weather was promised.

The young rabbi had not questioned his friend, though he felt that some grave problem troubled him. The intimacy between them had been sufficient to warrant his friendly curiosity, or rather inquiry, but he deemed it better to let Ezra break his reticence voluntarily. Ezra desired his friend's sympathy, but had he suspected just what form that sympathy would take, he would have decided then and there to withhold his confidence altogether.

So selfish is the human mind, and more especially when smarting under supposed injury! It never occurred to Ezra that his friend could find aught in his conduct to rebuke. He

never expected to be accused of undue precipitation, or of considering the question from his own narrow point of view solely. His hesitancy in revealing his troubles to Peter was simply because he was beginning to find it necessary to reiterate in his own mind, his sense of Leah's disobedience to himself, and of her "stubborn unwillingness" to let him guide and control her spiritual outreachings as well as all other details of her life. However, in the nature of things, the subject must soon come up, which it did when, after their promenade, they lighted cigars and sat together on the deck, in their comfortable easy chairs. Then Ezra spoke:

"No doubt, Rabbi, you are wondering what leads me to leave my home just at this time?"

"Yes, Judge. I confess to a certain amount of friendly curiosity. I have heard so much of your wonderful happiness in the marriage you made, that I can't help hoping that the trouble, if any, is not serious enough to permanently affect it."

"I don't know. The question is one of religious views, and offers a stubborn resistance."

"Well, truly the question of religion is a vexing one; but in this day of broader thinking, it should not prove insurmountable. May

I hear what it is that is troubling you, Ezra?"

"I want to tell you, for I need a friend's sympathy." It may be noticed that Ezra did not say "counsel."

"You have it in advance, old friend."

"Thank you, Peter. I was sure of it. Well, then, the matter stands thus:" And Ezra hereupon told his story, beginning from the day of Frau Betty's visit, and all the peculiar results of it.

"And," he ended, "now they want me to believe that this newly discovered faith of theirs in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, is the prime factor in the healing of my mother's eyes, and in the restoration of Leah's voice."

As Ezra spoke these last words he was provoked to feel way down in his heart an annoying sense of their sounding almost like the truth, and this it was perhaps, which made them come so testily from his lips.

Carillon looked at him studyingly awhile before answering, but Ezra was so wrapped about with his almost childish feeling of resentment, that he hardly noticed his friend's silence. He had selfishly taken it for granted that Peter's verdict would be wholly for him, and he was completely taken aback when Peter at last said:

"Ezra, I had given you credit for a larger

liberalism and broader religious sympathies. Have you not felt stirred out of narrow ecclesiasticism, by the theological upheaval of the day? Why, man, it permeates the very air you breathe on land or sea. Before you now, you see a man who has almost been turned from his dogmatic purpose by the very discovery which you abjure with so much abhorrence."

"You mean?" questioned Ezra.

"I mean the discovery that the Messiah consists not of a personality, but of the power of Mind rightly and naturally directed. In fact, that it was the Mind actuating the man, and not the personality of the man, which accomplished the so-called 'miracles' of olden time, whether the man were Moses, Elijah, Jesus or the beginning-to-be-recognized-seer of this later day: Mary Baker Eddy."

Ezra was stunned. "What is there in this claptrap that can turn even the brightest minds adrift in its contemplation? You astound me, Carillon. How can you as a rabbi, hold to these heretical views?"

"I do not hold to them as a rabbi, Ezra, but as a hungry man. These 'views'—not 'claptrap' as you call them, but solid demonstrable logic, as I am believing more and more each day as I try to put into practice the little I

comprehend as yet—are what are driving me further and further from rabbinical inclination. It was a large hope with me that you too, had been awakened by this clarion call, and were getting ready to rally around the banner of Truth."

Ezra made his impatient gesture.

"Is there no escape? Why did you not tell me this sooner, Peter? It will give me no pleasure to argue this matter out here on shipboard. I came to forget, not to have it confront me on every hand. You know that my very name binds me. I would rather not even talk about it any more."

A little laugh was barely suppressed by Peter.

"Why, Ezra, this is hardly manly, and most flagrantly selfish. I never suspected this quality in you before. Why can you not look a topic of the day squarely in the face, even if to you it must remain merely a topic? But we will leave it for the present, though I doubt if it will ever leave either of us for long again."

The gong sounded for dinner, which proved good enough to dispel any man's megrims, even though they arose from a grievance. Both men ate heartily, then repaired again to the deck, each with a book.

The rabbi was soon engrossed in his book,

but Ezra found it harder to fix his attention. Thoughts of home intruded. Almost against his will, the picture of his sweet pleading young wife, arose to torment him. How strange it was that, since leaving her, he had heard almost nothing else than of this new doctrine which had shattered their happiness. First Jerry, and now Carillon. Could it be possible that he alone had been deaf and blind to its existence? He had never heard its name mentioned before Frau Betty visited them, and now the very air seemed to be full of it. At any rate, Leah need not have gone and found all this out for herself without first consulting him, and if there were anything in it, why could they not have searched it out together.

Why indeed, except the human man of it! Ezra did not see that the contemplation of any subject from a material standpoint, hides the possibility of a spiritual perception. He was very human, as we see, but by no means exempt from enlightenment on that account. Devotees of this, to Ezra, enraging doctrine, would have reminded him or themselves, that Jesus came not to those who were perfect, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And what is it to be a "lost sheep?" Simply to have been led away from the true understanding of God and man's relation to Him; as his

chosen people were until Jesus, the shepherd, went out to seek, and found them. Did he seek them only in Judea? No, he recognized a world-wide sonship, and they only were lost, who did not the same. Israel in the beginning, had worshipped the Father truly, but were turned aside after idolatry; and Jesus taught that mere Judaism was not Israelitism. He said: "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

The book which Carillon was now reading, was fast revealing the true inwardness of these things to him. He began presently to notice Ezra's restlessness. Closing the book with his finger between the leaves to keep the place, he looked invitingly at Ezra, who was not slow to accept the invitation to talk, and so escape the persistence of his thoughts.

"What is the book, Peter?"

"Why, the book of the day, I believe, ergo, 'Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures,' by Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer and founder of this new-oldest religion that ever was."

"Oh, that is the book, I believe, which has caused all my trouble."

"Hardly. I believe your 'trouble' was caused by your unwillingness to investigate the marvellous truths which are set forth in this book.

See here, Ezra, have you ever deeply studied the question, *What is God?* If so, you will see that you have never had any definite idea. I believe the day has gone by when we may take things for granted. Today, people want to know. The only way to know is to prove or demonstrate a theory or a promise. This book shows us how progress removes all obstacles to human achievement. Is it not wise to accept, or at least investigate, that which is presented to us as religious progress, as well as progress on material lines? We must not be narrow. We cannot afford to be. The bigots will be left behind in the great race of this strenuous age. Narrowness reduces success in any direction, to a minimum. I cannot see but that our own wise men are eschewing bondage to traditionalism, and are daring to think for themselves. Even at the seminary, where only strict Orthodoxy is supposed to obtain, a certain restlessness and dissatisfaction is steadily gaining ground, among the faculty as well as among the students. The leaven of Love is at work, you see. The Love which this book declares to be God. I firmly believe that because of this book men are wanting to find in God a unified instead of the old dual nature. Common logic tells us that one thing cannot be two things, and these diametrically opposed,

at the same time, or at any time. A real thing remains what it is for aye. Grant this?"

"Yes."

"Well then, here is your big question: How can GOOD at one time be *good*, and at another time be *bad?* at one time *love*, and at another, *hate?* at one time *merciful* and *tender*, and again, *pitiless* and *revengeful?* Yet these are His various qualities in our conception of Him when we attribute the ills of this life, as well as its joys, to His will and purpose concerning us."

"But how do you know that what seems ill, in His purpose is not really good in disguise?"

"We must first accept the promise that His purpose is only good, and then we will not try to reconcile the two. That is a true saying, 'the same fountain cannot send forth sweet and bitter waters.'"

"There should be no bitterness in ills sent by Him."

"Do you honestly accept such an ultimatum for yourself?"

"I believe I do."

"Then why do you seek relief from any painful or untoward circumstance in your experience of life?"

"Do you not believe that He intends us to struggle and surmount such difficulty?"

"No, for I do not believe He sends the

trouble at all. I believe that every effect must resemble its cause. So God, being the First Great Cause, as our own religion teaches, can produce no other effect than good."

"But, my dear boy, how do we know what is really good?"

"We can only accept a standard and reject its opposite. I am beginning to have a great respect for the opinions of this man, Jesus, who declared that he had come to destroy the works of the devil, or evil; and looking at the things which he did destroy, we cannot find anything which is commonly accepted as good among them. Again, this book teaches that the things which he destroyed were sin, sickness and death, and that since these could be destroyed, they could not have been made by God, whose work must surely be indestructible—especially man, whom He declared He had made in His own image and likeness."

Ezra was thoughtful. "Well I confess, this is too deep for me. But it seems heretical; and after all, why need a Jew become a Christian in order to obtain spiritual or physical benefit?"

"What matter the name, Judge?"

"Is it not wise that a system, of either Christianity or Judaism, claiming to work out such problems as these, should be designated by a name belonging to neither Christian nor

Jew, so that neither might feel a sense of disloyalty in appropriating such name?"

"As a mere question your point is not badly taken; but it indicates in you such exclusiveness in religious opinion and form, as to amount almost to pharisaism—the 'I am better than thou' thought. It is time, Judge, that your sympathies began to broaden, for in the life-work you have chosen, the sectarian question may not enter."

"On the contrary, it is my desire to right the wrongs of my own people, and help to free them from the consequences which even at this day follow the persecutions of earlier times."

"And this you can only accomplish by teaching them and humanity at large, the proper meaning of freedom—its mental instead of physical nature. When man learns how 'God made all His creatures free,' and that 'Life itself is liberty;' that matter is but the dream-existence, and Spirit the real—I say that until men understand their dominion in Mind, they are worshipping other gods, and may be subjected to any of the disastrous conditions to which their own limitations expose them. But," with a hearty laugh at the bewildered expression on Ezra's face, "perhaps you do not catch my drift. If you care to, just take this book and read a chapter or two, while I

meander off and find the steward and coax him for a pineapple or something juicy."

Ezra took the book in a half mechanical way, and watched his friend puzzledly as he made off in the direction of the cabin.

"But he is a Jew," he argued to himself. "True his name is not 'Ezra.' What does 'Peter' mean, I wonder. I shall ask him."

And then, "just to oblige him," as he thought, he plunged at once into the book. Peter coming back a little later, saw how absorbed he was, and did not interrupt him, but turned back, and entered into conversation with a dear little old lady who was travelling alone.

XVII

PETER'S STORY

PETER was so seated that he could see his friend without being himself too much in evidence, and when at last Ezra closed the book and passed his hand over his eyes and face as though to brush away the cobwebs, Peter placed a cushion more comfortably behind the little old lady's head, arranged the stool at her feet and excused himself.

"A charming young creature," sighed the little lady to herself. "So strong, handsome and—polite. A considerate man, who will make some fair young thing happy some day." And thoughts of her own young days and her own gallant young lover perhaps it was which necessitated the touch of a dainty handkerchief to her eyes.

As Peter approached, Ezra arose from his lounging position and handed him the book.

"Thank you, Rabbi; a strange book. I hardly see more in it after my hour's study than I did before; or rather, I remain as

much mystified, if not more so, than ever."

"How so?"

"I can't explain just now. Let us leave the subject for a little, shall we? There is just time to shave and dress for supper and the evening."

The evening was wondrously beautiful. Only one night out from New York, but already the balm of the southern atmosphere could be felt. A glorious moon and myriad stars made the clear blue of the sky intensely dark and cavernous, and the mystery of the boundless waste of ocean filled our hero's being with vague unrest and—could it be heimweh? Already was he wishing for the sweet communion, to which space had been no obstacle, had not human hatred of the truth and cold injustice blocked its free passage?

As yet Ezra's injuries were too fresh to permit more than a passing regret at the step he had taken. He was still nursing his own grievances, never thinking of the possible sorrow of those he had so cruelly wounded and flung aside. Carillon, noting his friend's abstraction, walked away and left him musing far into the night.

The next day was uneventful as far as our hero's problem was concerned. The subject of Christian Science was not mentioned between

the friends. Instead, Carillon related a bit of personal history for Ezra's entertainment. He told how that on his visit home after leaving college, and before entering the seminary he had made himself in response to his father's desire, familiar with the working details of the family estate. His father was aging and ailing, and with the pessimism of such conditions, wanted his son to understand his affairs, in case he "were taken away."

"This father had never wanted his son to take orders. It was at his mother's desire that Peter found this outlet for a naturally philanthropic nature, agreeable. His father believed his son's nature too large to be bound by the narrowness of rabbinical operations. But he had never refused Rachel anything, and when she pleaded that their firstborn be consecrated to the service of God, and follow in the footsteps of her own father, Rabbi Nathan, he consented after very little protest.

"But, Rachel, the lad would never be satisfied with the restrictions of such work. He is cut out for something entirely different. Think what a splendid opportunity for his philanthropy and clear business brain he would find as master of this estate and his own steward."

"Yes, Reuben, but would it not be a beautiful thing for us to build him a synagogue right

here in the town? We would have him near us, and gather the scattered believers from the towns round about."

Not so much as a smile crossed Reuben's face. She was too much in earnest. He kissed her and promised to place no obstacles in the way. So when the young man was questioned as to his own feelings in the matter, he looked into his mother's expectant face, and immediately crushed any yearnings he had indulged towards his father's more practical plans for him. Sooner would he have died than caused that mother a pang. To college he went, and met Ezra, to whom he now tells the story of his last vacation at home before he left for the seminary.

"Cane Garden as the estate was called, was a beautiful spot. It was so named because of the sugar cane which grew in the farther end of the land. But we were cotton planters mainly. Apart from the acres and acres of cotton fields and the quarters stretching off to the east, the homestead was built upon an eminence in the midst of beautiful gardens. How I love the dear old house with its hospitable steps, alike front and back, wide at the bottom and narrowing to the width of the long cool hall at the top, through which, running the full length of the house, we went to the duplicate back stair-

case, leading down to the gardens. The rooms of the house were built on both sides of this long hall or parlor, and were all large, light and airy. My mother used to have the colored folks up at the 'Hall' after cotton-picking, and on certain holidays, and give them a dance and refreshments in this wide hall. To say that they loved her wouldn't express it, and my father who had been adored by his slaves, could not have gotten rid of them and their descendants if he had tried. He kept them all and paid them full wages, and nothing on the estate was different to that before the war, whose damage had all been repaired by means of friendly loans of Northerners, which loans have been fully cancelled.

"The estate next to ours was called Laurel Hill, and was the home of an old Southern family. Mrs. Hill and her only daughter lived here most of the time. This daughter, Nancy—or Missy as the fond colored folks called her—is my Miracle! That God could have created anything so sublime seems incredible."

Peter was so carried away by his memory, that he hardly heard Ezra's muttered "Miracle indeed! There is only one." Peter looked at him unseeingly and went on:

"What do you think this angel was doing? Why, just after the close of the war, uncle

Remus and aunt Mandy, who had a log hut at the extreme end of the estate, produced a protege they had rescued and tended for years unknown to us. This was a man, unmistakably a gentleman, whom they had found wandering about on the banks of the creek which skirts the estate at that end. There was a gaping bullet wound in his head, which accounted for the fact that he seemed to have lost all memory of what had occurred to him just previously. Uncle Remus decided from the mud-stained and torn uniform that this was a northern war-victim, and fearing that my father might feel in duty bound to give him up as a prisoner, he and aunt Mandy secreted him in the small half attic of their hut, and nursed him faithfully for all of that time undiscovered. There was not a thing on his person by which the man could be identified, and the battle in which he had evidently fallen, had been too recent for the dead to have been cleared away. Most likely he had been passed by as dead when the wounded was moved from the field.

"This good old colored couple, while devoted to their Massa and Missis, still shared their brethren's half superstitious veneration for the blue uniformed officers, whom they felt sure were come to save and set them free. And

as the days went on without discovery, they began to bring the soldier down the rickety ladder leading from the attic, which was but a little more than a broad shelf of rough boarding. All this they told us afterwards. Little Serena and Jackie adopted the gentle mannered invalid, and would carry him off for walks, perfectly happy if he noticed them enough to pat their heads occasionally and smile at their funny pickaninny antics.

"Meanwhile the sounds of war were receeding, and with its noise their fear of discovery grew less, and every evening the soldier with Serena and Jackie, as well as uncle Remus and aunt Mandy, would sit outside their door; uncle Remus with his pipe and aunt Mandy either mending Jackie's little trousers or Serena's Sunday frock; and sometimes putting a patch in the ragged uniform, for there were no means of getting clothes for their 'Sojer.'

"Although this hut was on my father's ground, it was nearer to Laurel Hill than to the Hall, being on the confines of our place. Uncle Remus had been stationed there as one of our best watchmen, and as a protection to the widow Hill and her little girl, Nancy. Nancy used to run down sometimes and play with Serena and Jackie, and one day as she flew down the hill bounding their own estate,

she came suddenly upon this group. It happened that Nancy's visits were usually timed at the same hour, during which Sojer was kept in statu quo. Mandy had threatened all sorts of dire penalties if the children so much as mentioned Sojer to Nancy or any one else, and the threats had proved miraculously effective. The children helped keep the secret well, and if Sojer was anywhere in evidence when the hour of Nancy's visits drew near, they would wander off and meet her half way, and carry on their play at a distance from the hut. To-day, however, she had come unexpectedly, and there was no time to beat a retreat.

"Nancy was just six, and a fearless child, so the Yankee uniform did not frighten her. But war-times made even the children cautious. She pulled up with a jerk, and continued her advance slowly and on tiptoe.

"The soldier's ears were keen, and in fact he seemed in nowise a sufferer except in the matter of loss of memory. He heard the light footfall, and turned. Seeing only a little maid half timid and uncertain, he smiled and held out his hand. At once the dainty palm was laid in his, and while Serena and Jackie never lost their place, she and the soldier became real chums. Questions were put by her which they never thought of. In fact Remus, Mandy and

the children had taken their Sojer much for granted, while little Miss Inquisitive lost no time in trying to unravel this mystery, though never forgetting her inborn Southern courtesy to the stranger.

"One day she asked him his name. He answered, 'Sojer,' this being the freshest thing in his memory. The children called him nothing else, and continually. It was 'Sojer, play ball with me' from Jackie; or 'Sojer, turn the rope for me' from Serena; and after Nancy joined them, 'Let's play tag, Sojer; Sojer's it;' or from Mandy, 'Here you Jackson'—Aunt Mandy never undignified a name by abbreviation—'take Sojer out in de woods fur a walk;' or from uncle Remus, 'have a pipe, Sojer.' So 'Sojer' was a word he could remember.

"From the first Nancy seemed to have a beneficial effect upon him, and he would listen for her footstep at a certain hour each day, and babble joyously to her when she made her appearance. He never hesitated to do anything she asked of him, and discovery came about through this very means. He obediently followed her up to the Hill one day, when she asked him to come and see her mother.

"Mrs. Hill was a gentle, high-bred Southern lady, and welcomed an unfortunate guest, even though he was clad in the hated uniform. She

tried to question him, but elicited no further information than that he lived 'in the clearing with uncle Remus.' He had 'always lived there,' he said, and 'Remus, Mandy and the children belong to me.'

"Mrs. Hill lost no time in telling the story up at the Hall, and my father did his best to have the man's identity established. But though the proper officials were consulted, and actually brought into interview with Sojer, the case was one of many, and none was found who recognized his features. There was nothing left but to keep the unfortunate, though the Federal government did offer to assume the responsibility. Sojer himself decided the matter. When asked if he wanted to go north, he answered: 'Oh no, I'm very happy here on my own plantation. I want to stay right here. Crops will soon be ready for harvest now.' He thought he owned the place, and no one ever contradicted him.

"There was a general consultation as to whether it would not be better to move him up to the Hall, or into more comfortable quarters. But when this was proposed to him he protested vehemently. He could not leave his house until after harvest. They could not do without him. So mother made his little attic more cosy, and father fitted him out with

clothes, and the old uniform was packed away for future reference, in case any evidence should turn up regarding him. Nancy became his constant companion, and when she went away to school nine years later, he grieved for a few days and then seemed to forget all about her."

Ezra listened to this recital with keen interest. It will be remembered that his own father had been killed in battle. The body had never been sent home. The field had been most bloody, and many unidentified dead had been quickly buried with military honors, on the spot where they fell. The heat was too intense to leave the bodies exposed, and there was no time for preparation, so the heroes were laid in trenches dug at dead of night, and all who were missed from roll-call next day, were reckoned among the number, and word sent to the sorrowing families.

This story had brought back the old memory of how his mother had grieved over the fact, and through his mind, so trained to find significance in trifles, there flashed a sudden question, almost clairvoyant:

"What if his father had escaped and Sojer were he? But no. Such things belong only to the romancists. They never happened in real life."

But there was food for thought, and he urged Peter to go on with his interesting narrative.

XVIII

NANCY

NOTHING loth, Carillon continued: "We were chums in those days, Nancy and I, and often I went wandering with her and Sojer. I always noticed how much brighter and more intelligent he looked when under the charm of her presence. She was glorious, even when but a child, and had the happy faculty of bringing out the best in every one. I was two years older than she, and went to school three years before she did. We promised then, never to forget each other, and you see, we haven't. I went to a preparatory school in Massachusetts, and Nancy was sent three years later to Miss Worden's, a fashionable school in New York."

"Why," said Ezra, "then she must have known my Leah?" The "my" came out unconsciously.

"Probably," said Peter, who was just now in a reminiscent mood regarding "my Nancy," and so was but little impressed with any other "my."

"Nancy came home at nineteen, and has been a veritable 'Lady Bountiful' to the neighborhood ever since. She and Sojer resumed their old friendship, and now they say the cloud is beginning to roll away from his brain. I am going home to marry her, Ezra. Wish me happiness, old man."

"I do. Indeed I do, Peter," answered Ezra heartily, then immediately fell into melancholy. Of what use to wish any one happiness in this world. Had his own prospects in this direction not been the most brilliant? And yet, here he was, stranded. So ran his thoughts. He turned and went down the companionway, and Peter saw him no more until the next day.

How very valuable to an author is that famous old cloak, which had the faculty of making its wearer invisible. Protected thus, he or she may wander about at sweet will, and gather facts concerning those of whose lives he would write, free from the self-consciousness attendant upon recognized observance. Encased thus, the author safely culls the honey of sweet lives, and penetrates the masks which all men wear, and brings out to make hearts glad, the hidden beauties of some self-extinguished natures.

That the cloak does not always help us to a delectable view, is no excuse for its nonuse.

Judicious contrasts lend a charm to pictures and landscapes, and until one's material concept is outgrown, and the ideal, or the spiritual concept understood, contrasts will not seem to be so much opposites as balances, and again, foils. We have been accustomed to think that the bright seems brighter because of a bit of gloom, ane vice versa. But after all, the most satisfying lives as well as pictures, are those in which no harsh contrasts are visible, but only a gradation of tone so perfect in blending, that it would be difficult to find where light began and darkness melted away.

This author, at least, feels a desire for rest. Rest from the perusal of descriptions of the madness of strife and world-fag. Taking it for granted that the average reader's need is as her own, she wears the cloak as nearly as possible in the path of light. As she passes by the marts where evil dwells, she draws a corner of the cloak over her eyes, but opens them wide to take in the glory of the beautiful, of which side of existence all too little is placed before the hungry seeker of this desideratum, in books.

There is no charm more potent than purity in unfolding womanhood. This charm was Nancy's. Never was thought freer from guile, never heart more single in purpose. Our cloak

is taking us on a visit to her, and long would we linger in the paradise which such a woman creates around her.

Peter left it for us to tell, how during his vacation last year, and on the day of our visit, we found Nancy seated in the garden at Laurel Hill, on a rustic bench, under a wide spreading shade tree. At her side was Sojer, listening intently as she read to him from a book laid open upon her knee. Serena, now quite grown up, had for some time lived at the Hill, and served as Nancy's maid. She sat at a little distance on the grass, with some sewing in her hand, her ears and heart filled with the beauty of the words which fell so sweetly from her beloved missy's lips. Now Nancy began to talk to Sojer:

"Sojer, dear, do you comprehend a little bit of what I read to you?"

"Yes, Nancy. You read that man is perfect. Do you mean that I am perfect?"

"Of course you are."

Sojer drew himself up and squared his shoulders.

"I know it," he said; "I could carry a gun." He presented imaginary arms. "I did it once," he went on. "It was mighty exciting to shoot it off; but I never hit anything; aim was poor; very poor. Now I must go see that Remus

brings in the corn properly, and the chickens must be fed." And so the little gleam of intelligence faded out again.

Nancy rose to walk with him, saying: "Never mind, Sojer, so much about the crops, but try to remember that you are a child of God. Now say, 'I am a child of God,'" she coaxed.

"I am a child of God," he repeated obediently. "I am a child of God." And every day this lesson was repeated, sometimes with variations, as "I reflect the divine intelligence;" or, "I have dominion over evil;" or, "I cannot be bound down by any sense of limitation."

It is possible that Sojer did not comprehend the full meaning of these declarations, which he consented to make through love for Nancy. But neither does a baby understand the meaning of the words "mamma" and "papa" when from love of these gentle teachers it makes its first feeble efforts at imitation. Later the meaning grows, and the child learns to connect the sound with the object for which it stands. So Nancy had faith that soon these words would come to be connected in Sojer's mind with the qualities they stood for, until the qualities themselves would become real too, and manifested through him.

Serena, whom Missy had taught to read,

would take the book, spelling out the "hard words," and Nancy pronounced and explained them, always calling Sojer's attention to their application to himself and his own condition.

"Now, Sojer," she said, not knowing how much if anything of a Christian Sojer was or had been, "the book teaches that Christianity includes freedom from disease as well as from moral ills."

"Christian! What is a Christian? I never knew such a thing before."

Are you not a Christian, Sojer?"

Sojer thought awhile, then answered decidedly:

"No, I'm nothing but a planter. I must go and look after the cotton." This was always his refuge when perplexed. To "go and look after" some matter on the plantation, which by the time he reached his favorite seat beneath the shady beech tree, he had entirely forgotten. Nancy would leave him there contentedly smoking his pipe and musing pleasantly, until Mandy, now a gray haired and comely old woman, came and called him to supper or to bed.

Nancy, in this work of love, never gave up hope that some day, "in the twinkling of an eye," the darkness of Sojer's mind would give place to light, through the operation of the

divine Mind brought to bear. She believed that the little gleams of intelligence were becoming more marked and frequent, and she continued to sow her seed, willingly leaving its fruition to that higher power she ever invoked.

There was a calm and brightness about Nancy which were soothing and very infectious. One could not be with her long and not feel that life was very worth while after all. She was a great favorite up at the Hall. Mr. and Mrs. Carillon loved her as a daughter, which each day they regretted more and more that "she could never be," as Peter, even if inclined, could not marry "a woman from out of the nations." He was to be a rabbi, and his wife could only be a Jewess, and one of pure, unquestioned Jewish ancestry. There could be no danger in permitting an intimate association of these young people, as Peter had a most proper sense of the fitness of things, and Nancy would never think of falling in love with a Jew. So, unconsciously selfish in their security from such a problem, Reuben and Rachel sought pleasure in the presence at the Hall of this young and refreshing creature.

Sometimes Mrs. Hill accompanied her daughter on her visits to Cane Garden, and nothing ever marred the harmonious associations of these friends, who met on common ground in

every respect save one, and that was the difference in religion. Mrs. Hill was an Episcopalian, and, in a sort of negative way, devout. In this, not unlike the large army of conscientious churchgoers, who thus think their duty to God in connection with the refraining from evil deeds, is fully accomplished. Why do people not see that unless religious fervor result in active doing along the lines of divine commands, of good, religion remains empty, theoretic, and nonaccomplishing.

As a little child, Nancy had sensed the difference between calling oneself a Christian and being one. But she had no other teaching to guide her outside of her own instictive desire to be what she professed, than the cold and perfunctory exhortations of a very scholastic and ecclesiastical clergyman of narrow learning and conservative opinions. No wonder then, that the restoration of Leah's voice impressed her. The details of this healing had crept out in the school after Leah went away, and truly the smallest seed falling upon fertile soil, germinates and bears fruit. Nancy had spoken to Frau Betty about the matter and heard somewhat of the subject, and where to investigate further. This she did with the result that when her last year at school was completed, Nancy returned home full of the spirit of truth

and love, and became a lady beneficent to the whole neighborhood. Not only with compassionate sympathy, but with a practical activity, did she help to lighten their cares, whether of sorrow, sin, sickness or death; and there was hardly a man, woman or child for miles around who had not in some way come in touch with and been benefitted by her serene and untiring religious efforts, or who would not gladly have sacrificed much to serve or even please her.

When Peter came home from college for a two months vacation, he had ample opportunity to witness the beneficial influence which his "little sweetheart" of olden days, now developed into a charming young woman, had upon the people, and immediately fell under the spell himself.

One day he followed her to a rustic summer house in her own grounds, where she had gone for a few moments to read, while waiting for her mother who was preparing for a drive to the village. He came upon her unawares, and stood for a minute admiring the picture she unconsciously made. Then entering, exclaimed:

"Nancy, you are so different from all the girls I know. What makes you so? Can you tell?"

Nancy, no whit startled, answered at once:

"Do you think me a 'curus' little old maid,

Peter? Please don't. I'm sure I feel just as I imagine all girls feel."

"Your imagination on this point is wide of the mark, then. Most girls feel first of all, special interest in the cut, quality and beauty of their habiliments; then wonder as to the effect these will have on the mind of the genus homo; then how soon said intended victim will transfer his attention from her clothes to herself; and lastly, how long it will take to convert him into Sir Benedict."

"You are mistaken, good sir," Nancy laughingly rejoined. "Most girls in planning their outer shells, have an eye to participation in and extension of, the world's beauty. Why should not the most interesting thing in the world be suitably and beautifully arrayed? She would be a paradox else. Further, can you find aught of fault with my attire, that you attribute indifference on this score to me?"

And without the least bit of conscious coquetry, she pirouetted before him, sending out soft billows of some filmy material of a pale gray shade, with an occasional pink rose bud which had been hidden in the folds, now displayed in the pattern. Nancy's gray silk bonnet with its bunch of pink roses inside the brim, and a bunch of pink baby ribbon on the upper edge, framed as sweet a face as one

would want to see—a face bearing no trace of peculiarity or fanaticism, but only a girlish calm quite unruffled, and with the glow of sincere enthusiasm for the work which she had adopted as her own.

Peter regarded her appreciatively. She made indeed, a lovely picture, with her arms extended and held a little high, her pretty head bent to see the effect on her clothes of the pirouette, and her daintily shod feet, which, according to Sir John Suckling:

"beneath her petticoat
Like little mice stole in and out
As if they feared the light;
But oh! she dances such a way,
No sun upon an Easter day,
Is half so fine a sight."

"Well," she demanded at last coming to a standstill before him; "pray, sir, your verdict?"

"My 'verdict,' oh most worthy criterion of all your sex, is that they who pattern not after you, do greatly err. But seriously, Nancy, one does not think of your clothes when seeing you. The picture and frame are always so perfectly adapted as to be most natural compliments of each other. I maintain that with most girls, the first thing you see is their gown. But when I look into your face Nancy, my eyes refuse to stray further. And indeed they

need not, for there is focused all the daintiness and harmony you seem to radiate."

And in some mysterious way, Nancy being very near to him, Peter's arm went out and drew her closer. She raised questioning eyes to his, but what she saw there made her drop her own quickly, and sent the daintiest of rose flushes over her face and neck.

"You have not forgotten 'Peter Piper,' have you, Nancy? Still with his 'peck of pickled peppers,' as you used to call his spicy speeches. But oh, if you do not answer as you did in the dear old times when you scolded 'but I love you all the same, Peter,' what shall I do? Say, sweet, have you forgotten? I told you I would tell you again that I loved you, and I tell it now. I love you, Nancy, love you, love you!"

Her pretty head drooped still lower, and her slender form trembled a little within the encircling arm though she made no attempt to answer or withdraw. Encouraged by this latter, Peter placed a finger beneath the chin and raised the drooping head just enough to peep within the bonnet. What he saw there does not belong to us, but we may know the delightful result. Who ever would have thought that one little bonnet feminine could cover a masculine head at the same time so completely! What a waste of good material to make the

brims so deep! But no, Nancy would not agree with us at all, nor even Peter. Dear creatures! They know nothing about our invisible cloak, do they?

But it is not fair to intrude on this most sacred moment in the lives of youth. The blending of a duality into unity. Two hearts and souls and lives becoming one for good and aye. In fact the cloak can't help its wearer penetrate the inwardness of things, only outward results of such things. So while we may have seen that meeting of lips, we could not witness the mental exaltation of which that was but the outward manifestation.

If curious on this point, we are foiled, and justly. Instead of invading our neighbor's sanctum, we should make one for ourselves. Then from that point of vantage, we will inwardly see that those who love, in heaven are. Need we, or can we know more?"

XIX

"HE MUST BE A PREACHER"

So happy were the young people in their love-dream that they never thought of possible opposition from their elders. This confidence perhaps partly accounted for the little displayed. Rachel's chief regret was on the ground of Peter's rabbinical career. She feared such a marriage would interfere with this dearest of her hopes. But when Peter consented to go to the seminary, her imagination began to run riot with the hope that Nancy, for love of Peter, and for his sake, might consent to become a Jewess. Reuben, on his part hoped secretly, that Peter, for love of Nancy, would put aside his theological work and be content as master of Cane Garden, and working steward thereof. Mrs. Hill cried a little at the thought of Nancy marrying a Jew, but was consoled when Nancy told her that the religion which she had adopted as hers would surely appeal to Peter, and so they would be one in thought, as well as heart

and mind, without fear of clash or discord.

Nancy was a seer on this point, prophesying truly. Very soon after the engagement which followed, and before Peter left for his studies, she broached the subject to him and was rejoiced at his ready acceptance of the logical conclusions involved, and his willingness to look further into the matter. He went with her on all her errands of mercy and so became familiar with the practical side of her religion. He witnessed her efforts for Sojer, and tried to aid her by keeping his thought fixed on the side of her declarations of the positiveness, and even allness of harmony, and the nothingness of discord, and to know that mind made or marred human existence accordingly as it was divinely or humanly directed.

So it came about that with further study, he was able to speak to Ezra intelligently, when circumstances threw them together as we have related.

To return to Ezra. On the last day of their stay on board, Ezra was restless. While he thought he had no desire to hear more of Christian Science than Peter had already told him, there were a few questions he wanted to ask, and as they walked on the upper deck after dinner, he blurted out one:

"What was there new, Peter, in the teaching of Jesus? Is not Judaism today as much Judaism as in the days of our own prophets and teachers?"

"Judaism, as well as anything else, must always remain the thing which it really is. But one's misconception of any reality may well and gratefully be abolished, and this is what the great Jew aimed to accomplish—to destroy the misconceptions of a perverted dogma, which presented nothing of its true inwardness to the seeker, but overwhelmed him with a mass of form and ceremonial, answering no purpose but to build a wall of exclusiveness and cruelty around itself."

"And to what extent was his purpose accomplished? Have not his followers excelled us in cruelty and illiberalism?"

"He did not teach narrowness, bigotry or cruelty. On the contrary, he exhorted his followers to 'love one another,' and even on the cross prayed, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' You will allow, that lack of performance in an individual is not proof of what a theory may be capable of if put into operation. And just here the example of the Nazarine becomes of vastly more importance than his words. There is no instance in which he did not himself do the things which

he urged upon his followers as obedience to the law of life. Therefore he may well be called the Way-shower."

"But were not the things he did, if indeed he did them, the result of organism?"

"Impossible. No organism could raise the dead, or walk the waves. Mental suggestion might indeed operate to destroy temporarily the consciousness of pain, but as soon as the suggestion is removed the pain will return. No. In time you will be convinced that the great power Jesus possessed was the power of love—this, and an intimate knowledge of his relationship to God, and the consciousness of the absolute unreality of sin and every physical ill, and its powerlessness to harm him."

"Then why did he not save himself from the crucifixion?"

"I verily believe he could have saved himself from his persecutors, as witness the incident when the soldiers came to take him, and the grandeur, dignity and force of his presence as with raised hand only he rebuked them, even felled them to earth. But had he shirked this final test of life apart from the body, his wondrous example to mankind would have been shorn of its greatest glory—forgiveness of ingratitude, insult and inhuman treatment, such as never a good man had been subjected to before."

"But, Peter, mere forgiveness of injury is not so stupendous a thing that it may not have been extended by any ordinary man."

"It must be an extraordinary Jew, however, who could so readily forgive as not even to retaliate. Why, the very law of Moses which exacts 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' placing justice above love, renders it more difficult, and caused Moses on beholding the Egyptian tormenting an Israelite, to slay the former, and hide his body by the wayside. But a fuller answer to your question is that had Jesus not have submitted to the crucifixion he could not have demonstrated the resurrection and ascension."

"Of what use were these to mankind?"

"Taken in their literal, material sense, not very much; but when we accept the promise that life is spiritual, their significance is colossal. If nothing else, they were of immense value in proving the power of mind over matter, and that spirituality can raise the dead as well as heal the sick."

"Why is it necessary for theologians to heal the sick; cannot that be left to the doctors?"

"A mere theologian cannot by his theology heal the sick. We are told that the truth will make us every whit whole. None can say that materia medica is truth, or based on anything

but speculation as to the constituent qualities and quantities of the material man, and the corresponding attributes of a senseless drug. A man's religion should suffice for, or meet his physical needs as well as his spiritual. It is religion to worship God by healing the sick as well as by reforming the sinner."

"You seem to make a distinction between theology and religion. What to your sense, is the difference?"

"Religion to my thought, is the practical use we make of theology. I grant that few recognize healing the sick to be a religious mission, but merely a physical one. Yet the Scriptures teem with instances of healing accomplished through the spiritual exaltation of prophets and seers—men who devoted their whole lives to the glorification of God. And then, the promises as to healing—they surely mean something more than we have previously discovered—for instance, we read in Malachi: 'Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.'"

"Speaking of names, Peter, what does yours mean to you? Does not every man's name entail an obligation?"

"I do not know what obligation mine could entail except it be to overcome impetuosity, and to acknowledge in all my ways, the Christ,

or Messiah. Peter, one of the disciples of Jesus, is said to have denied him thrice, but repented of his impetuous disloyalty, and severed the bonds of slavery to impulse."

"Peter, it jars me to hear you speak of Christ as the Messiah. How can you, a Jew, believe this?"

"You will notice, Ezra, that I did not say 'Jesus.' It is not the man at all, but the Principle he demonstrated. The power of the divine Mind, not matter nor material man, is the Messiah or Saviour."

"I see no difference. How do you make distinction between a man and his acts; are they not one and the same?"

"Exactly. But in the sense that man and his thoughts are one. Therefore the whole problem of being rests upon the accuracy or inaccuracy of our thought. The perfect man, who appeared as Jesus of Nazareth, was the exemplification of his own Christ-thought. The meaning of the word 'Christ' is brought out in Science and Health as principle, not as a personality. The man whose knowledge of this enabled him to manifest even to human ken, the eternalness of life, may well be considered the great exampler. And because he was the only one who so understood his relationship to God, and consequently his own divine nature,

we can make no mistake in acknowledging him the Way-shower, an elder brother, and the Messianic representative."

"But how can you say he was the only one to prove that life is eternal. Did not Elijah and other prophets restore the dead to life? How much better was he than they?"

"Ah yes, Ezra, but they only brought back the sense of life for others. He did it in his own case as well. I mean he never for a moment relinquished his own mental hold on life, but he put the thin edge of the wedge into the belief of others that life was in the body, by his own resurrection."

"Do you then believe that canard, Peter?"

"I acknowledge, Judge, that it was difficult for me to do so at first, but when I came to resolve things into thoughts, and to see God as infinite, omnipotent Mind, the truth that all things were possible to this Mind, then dawned upon me, and in a flash I saw that man, as Mind expressed—and he could be nothing else if made in God's image and likeness—must as effect, be as eternal and indestructible as his great and only Cause, or Father, God."

"Then perhaps too, you give credence to the absurd story of Jesus' birth? The story which has cast the glamour of fable over the career of this remarkable personality, but at the same

time stamped the whole account with the brand of suspicion and incredulity. Had such a claim never been made for his nativity, then his moral worth might have been more readily acknowledged by the Jews, and his value as a leader and teacher been recognized. Why did he never himself give the lie to this blasphemy? How dared he permit or tacitly avow so much preference to himself on the part of a just and powerful God?"

"In just these ways do the grandeur and strength of the man show themselves. He maintained in the face of the most bitter and cruel opposition, his firm faith in God as his Father and himself as the son. Truth was so much an integral part of his nature that even to gain popularity and be crowned king of the Jews, he would not cast so much as a reflection on the statement that he was 'born of God;' and Christian Science, first proving that all good is of God, reveals the how of this great event, by demonstrating the magnitude of Mind. And even to our limited, finite thought it should not be more difficult to believe that a pure concept, like Mary's, could be the channel of, or produce a perfect man, than that in the first place, a human being could be formed from dust, or a woman made from a rib. You may say that God was behind the deed in these two

instances, but you are bound then to acknowledge that it was no more difficult or impossible for Him to have been behind the deed in the instance of the immaculate conception. Surely the result of this divine activity has given to the world the rarest of gifts, a perfect man, while the first operation seems to have brought forth only chaos and disaster. I prefer to accept the theory which will lift my thought into the realms of utmost possibility, even though at this stage of growth I may not be able to comprehend clearly enough to bring out in my own life all the richness and beauty and certainty and perfection which were so gloriously manifested through him. I revere the name 'Jesus the Christ,' not for the personality of the man, but for all that it stands for in the betterment of mankind—dignity, courage, wisdom, power, tenderness, simplicity, veracity, capability, life, truth, and love! Oh, the greatest thing is love, and he teaches us to know and love it as God! What but God understood and loved, could have crowned him king of men, and son of God, in his sublime and immortal dominance of material selfhood, when he prayed on the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Oh, Ezra, it is this one sentence more than any other which has made a man of me. The stubborn

heart within me melted, and mentally I fell at his feet and prayed that this wondrous lesson might never lose its hold on me. It had been hard for me to believe that a man could forgive; but do you not see that if any one recognize himself and his fellowman as effects of the same Cause, as ideas of the same Principle, as spiritual and not material beings, there will be nothing left in their make-up through which injury could be done to another, or received by another? This he saw, and knew that they saw it not, and herein was his strength in human weakness displayed, that while he suffered pangs unspeakable, humanly speaking, he rose, in the grandeur of a perfect understanding, above all this, and with a love heretofore unknown, submitted his body to the extreme of human hatred, indignity and cruelty, in order that his wondrous teaching might not be shorn of its most vital element, love. Love is the word, Ezra, that is to redeem the world, and I thank God that He has let me know today a joyous veneration for the man of men, who by his own example has shown us our capabilities, and removed all of our limitations as sons and daughters of God."

During this delivery Peter had stood as one inspired. His head uplifted and his countenance glowing. He could not fail to have impressed

one with the fervor of his own exaltation. Ezra was entranced, not by the words themselves, but by the inspiration of expressed conviction. He felt that to say one word just then would be an intrusion. So he crept away and left Carillon to himself, on his pinnacle of perfect communion with the Source of his being.

"Well," he thought, as he went his way, "he must be a preacher, whether to the Jews or to the Gentiles. But what is to become of Israel when her brightest lights thus desert her?"

Ah, Ezra, do you not yet know that God can care for His own?

When next the young men met, a certain shyness was upon them both. Ezra felt ashamed to be still unable to yield a single point in his friend's philosophy; and Peter questioned if his laying bare of his sacred innermost manhood would be justified in results. So both avoided the subject altogether for the time being, and now but little time was left to pack their traps and get ready to land, as the ship had about reached her destination.

In parting, Peter handed Ezra a small package and said:

"Ezra, when loneliness reminds you most forcibly of home and loved ones, open this package and find in its contents, an admonishing, tender and convincing. You will want to

go home sooner when you know that a mere phantom keeps you away. And I wish, old friend, that you would promise to stop and visit us at Cane Garden when you pass on the homeward way."

"Thank you, Peter. It all depends though, on my state of mind. I would not wish to bring gloom into your happy atmosphere."

"Such atmosphere will dispel your gloom, if indeed any remain after you have taken my prescription."

"One word more, Carillon. How did you come to take up this line of thought?"

"I have a little girl back in Louisiana, Ezra, of whom I told you. The one whom I call 'my Miracle.' She has been doing wonderful things. Her life is a clear mirror in which is reflected the beauties of her mind and soul. She believes in and demonstrates this beautiful truth, and she it is who taught me."

"Then you are a Christian Scientist, Peter?"

"I have not been able to call myself so up to now, but I really believe that trying to enlighten you has reacted upon myself and brought some conviction which was lacking before."

And the young men, with every manifestation of unbroken friendship, parted. Peter to go home to Nancy and joy, and Ezra to

struggle with the demon of obstinacy and self-love, which still kept him from a reasonable and rational survey of the situation.

Instead of following him in his travels of the next six months, we shall make a visit to Milady and Leah, and see how the defection of their hero has affected them.

XX

FORSAKEN

UNCLE Jerry enjoyed the position of valued friend as well as steward to the people and estate of Rosemount. He had a fatherly affection for the young couple, and a deep reverence for Milady. The task Ezra imposed upon him of caring for them would have been welcome under any other circumstances, but now he could hardly bear to come face to face with the sorrowing pair. However, he took Mary by the hand, and went slowly up the path leading to Rosemount, soliloquizing all the way, and hardly heeding the chatter of the little maid at his side.

"Grandpa, are we going to see Milady, and may we not stop and pick some of these blue-eyes for her and Mrs. Ezra?"

"Yes, child, run along and pick your flowers."

As Mary ran ahead, he watched her and thought: "I had never kept her but for Mrs. Ezra. How can I doubt her goodness and the

value of her convictions. Poor Mr. Ezra! What a mistake he is making! But there is more than one way in which the eyes of the blind shall be opened. God will lead him to see the truth in some other land maybe. But better so, better so. That which comes through struggle is more valuable. His very sorrow will lead him to seek, and it is said, 'Seek and ye shall find.'

"Meanwhile I must do my best for the mistress and my young lady. They need not know his intention of remaining away. I am sure he will think better of it soon and return to his home."

And musing on the fallibility of human affairs and loves—for who would have thought that any such trouble could have come into the lives of these two who had seemed so admirably mated—the gentle old man walked along, his musing interrupted now and then by Mary, who would bring a wild flower or a pretty stone for him to admire.

Mary was a bright little girl, and the picture of health. She adored her "Mrs. Leah," as she called her, and Leah was very fond of this little brand she had "plucked from the burning;" that is, whom she had healed of a fever that threatened to carry the child off.

This was shortly after they came to Rose-

mount, and Mary never forgot the pretty lady who was so good to her then, and read such wonderful tales out of a little gray story-book. She was ever ready to leave her play or work to go to Rosemount, and when Grandpa consented to take her there, no sunbeam was brighter or happier. Today Jerry thought, "'A little child shall lead them' out of sorrow, and me to the telling."

When he reached the house, somewhat to his surprise he found no "sorrow" or trouble apparent. Miriam received him with her usual smiling calm, seemingly quite unconscious of any disturbing element about her. Jerry was phased. He wondered if she knew that Mr. Ezra had gone away for good. This uncertainty made it difficult for him to broach the subject. Miriam, so long accustomed to feel the moods of others, hardly needed to see the expression on Jerry's face to know that he was troubled.

"What is it Jerry?" she asked. "Something troubles you."

"Yes, Milady, something does. But perhaps I take the trouble too seriously, since you seem so little fearful?"

Jerry's reply was almost a question.

"If you mean Mr. Ezra's going away, Jerry, Mrs. Ezra and I have overcome all fear and trouble about it. We know he cannot go away

from God, and as we are near to God, there can be no separation. Only a mistake as to what constitutes togetherness, to be overcome, Jerry, and the rest will all come right."

Often Jerry got such lessons as these—short, but pointed—and the old man grasped their meanings readily. He felt that a religion so adaptable to every day living must indeed be the true one, and much comfort he got from his growing understanding of God as his Father, and his relation to Him as son.

He now told Milady about his interview with Ezra. Just for a wee moment, a feeling of resentment arose in Miriam's thought. How dared Ezra carry his obstinacy so far as to subject them to the scrutiny of even so good a friend as Jerry? But the feeling quickly passed as she noticed Jerry's respectful attitude, and sensed that in no way would he take advantage of Ezra's confidence. She promised to tell Leah herself, and if she were willing that any bulletins be sent to Ezra, uncle Jerry would receive them from time to time. With this Jerry was satisfied, and went away to look after some trifling matters on the place.

Miriam called Mary to her. The child had lingered in the background.

"Mary, don't you want to come and see Mrs. Leah?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, yes, Milady. And see what I have brought for you and her!" holding out two small hands clutching tightly a big bunch of wayside flowers.

Miriam kissed the little face pleading for appreciation of her gift, and conducted her, flowers and all, up to Leah's room.

Leah was arranging her hair as they entered, her arms high above her head. When she saw her stately mother and the eager, pretty child with her handful of flowers making a picture in the frame of the door, she dropped the shining masses of hair at once, and held both arms out to Mary. Mary sprang into them, and Leah held her close. Somehow children appealed to Leah these days.

"Did you bring all of these lovely flowers
e-?"
for- e- said Leah, in the way that al-
me-
ways delighted Mary; the "e-e-e" long drawn out and running down and up the scale.

Mary laughed joyously, and soon the two were bustling about finding vases and things to put the wilted sacrifices in. Sacrifices to Mary's love for Leah.

Why can we not leave the dear flowers on their stems? What is it that makes us want to pluck and hold the flowers in our hands, so

shortening their brief span of fragrance and beauty? Why can't we resist the inclination to take for ourselves what, if left to itself, would gladden so many another who would pass that way? Can we sense them more by taking them, than by seeing them in their natural and rightful places? Ah me! I never want to pick the flowers, but I love to see them grow.

Leah amused the child all the afternoon, and begged uncle Jerry to let her remain over night. Something of comfort and cheer came to her through the companionship and love of this pure little child-thought. Mary's love would never change; of that she felt sure. And it was a love that demanded nothing, not even a return. When this was given, she accepted it as a gracious gift, and used it to make joy for others as well as for herself.

Mary was ten, and a handy little maid. Leah let her do small useful things for her, for some day she was to be her own maid and "keep all these pretty things in order," as she promised Mary often. Mary could hardly wait for the day to come when she should be considered grown up enough to be Mrs. Leah's maid. Meanwhile Leah and Milady made play of teaching Mary to be helpful and thoughtful, and the result of their efforts justified their confidence.

When Jerry came to take Mary home next day, Leah asked him wistfully about his interview with Ezra.

"What did he say exactly, Uncle Jerry?"

"Why, Mrs. Ezra, his whole cry seemed to be that his name entailed an obligation. Yes, that is how he put it: 'My name entails an obligation, Jerry; I must live up to it.' But don't be worried, daughter, he will see his mistake and come back soon."

Two weeks later, Leah drew the fact from uncle Jerry that no address had yet come to which Jerry could send letters, and it was hard for her to overcome her grief, which seemed all of a sudden to break bounds and defy all Miriam's efforts at reasoning away. The result was that Miriam determined to spend the Christmas holidays in the town house, and remain there until the spring, by which time Ezra would surely have turned his thoughts and steps homeward.

With the first snow, early in December, they left Rosemount in Jerry's care, and went to New York, where for a little while the change and attention of friends helped to lighten the burden of Leah's grief. One day Milady spoke of Frau Betty:

"Let us go and see her, dear," she said, and Leah jumped at the suggestion.

When they reached Frau Betty's office on the eighth floor of the Metropole Building, they found a small crowd in an ante-room, waiting their turn for a few moments of Frau Betty's attention. Feeling it useless to wait, Miriam drew out her note-book, and pencilled a short note asking Frau Betty to dine with them that evening at seven. This she gave to the attendant, asking that it be delivered as soon as possible.

Of course Frau Betty went. Office hours were over at five o'clock. This gave her just time to go home and don a dinner gown. Leah was watching, and opened the door for her herself. She returned Frau Betty's embrace with a little gurgle of affectionate welcome. Frau Betty held her off contemplatively, and then came the sweet familiar old saying:

"*Ach, kind weisst du nicht, dass Gott ist Liebe?*"

At these words, so dear to Leah, her tears broke forth. She caught herself together with a sob, and Frau Betty, taking her hand without apparently noticing the outbreak, asked:

"And Milady?"

Leah recovered herself.

"Oh yes, dear Frau Betty. Milady is so eager to see you again. I am to bring you to her room at once."

Together they went up stairs unattended. Leah had not given Frau Betty a chance to ring the door-bell, so her arrival had not been announced to Milady. Leah pushed her gently, into the room as they reached the open doorway, and Milady turning at the slight noise, saw Frau Betty, and in a moment the two women were in a warm embrace.

After greetings had been exhausted, Frau Betty wanted at once to know what the trouble was.

"Why do I find Leah in discord?" she asked.

Milady suggested that they wait until after dinner to tell her all about it, but Frau Betty said:

"No. There is no time like now. What is it, my dear?"

And Leah, only too glad to unburden her heart at once to this kind friend, told her in a torrent of words and tears, all about Ezra's anger and disbelief, and its result in his leaving her.

"And I do not even know where he has gone, Frau Betty, and not a line from him in all this time. Oh, it seems more than I can bear!" she ended with another burst of grief.

"But, Leah, this is not like you, so unscientific. Are you making a reality of error, my child?"

"I have tried hard to see it as nothing, Frau Betty, but it doesn't seem to help me. I know you can do this though, and that is why we have ventured to impose upon your time. Oh, I was so afraid you could not come."

Miriam and Frau Betty exchanged sympathetic glances. This was a new Leah to both of them.

Here the summons came to dinner, and Miriam with a fond caress, bid Leah, "be brave, Leah. Come now to dinner, and we know Frau Betty will make it all right afterwards."

Leah would like to have remained in her own room so that the servants need not notice the signs of woe about her. But she could not bear to let Frau Betty out of her sight for a moment. She bathed her eyes and tried to smile, for already Frau Betty's strength and helpful unspoken sympathy had begun to do its work. Frau Betty did not ever say one-half the things she thought. But she thought them so well and so thoroughly, that one felt benefitted by the honesty and strength of her purpose always. Without more words, she took Leah's hand in her arm, and preceded by Milady, they went down to dinner.

Afterwards they went to the library—"The cosiest place for a good chat," Milady said. And here Frau Betty listened again to

Leah's story, and arraigned her in no measured terms.

"Is this the best you can do, Leah, with all your understanding of the truth? Are you loving your fellow-man as you should?"

"If you mean Ezra, I know I love him."

"I know it not, if love for him cause you grief. Love protects from grief."

"But I cannot overcome my grief at the thought that he would turn from me because I wanted to obey my conscience."

"He has not turned from you, my child. He has but run away from the truth, or thinks he has. He will find it hard to escape, however, for it is everywhere, and now that it has once been presented consciously to his thought, he will be confronted on every hand by some evidence of its ubiquitousness. This will turn his thought homeward, and he will find the sweetest teacher after all, to be his wife." She placed her kindly hand on Leah's bowed head. "Look up, look up, my dear. You are making a reality of evil."

"I confess, Frau Betty, that just now evil or error does seem real to me. Why should Ezra have shown such obstinacy and unkind tendency just when I had found a truth so beautiful?"

"To say Ezra is obstinate or unkind is to

see your fellow-man less than the perfect child of God. So long as you do this, how can you expect him to manifest anything else? Tut, tut, Leah. You have let go your hold. Take up the reins of self-government, and guard your thoughts from judging."

"But I want to see him so," sobbed Leah weakly.

Frau Betty thundered, and her thunder was big.

"And can you see him through such self-blinded eyes? If you want to see him, look at his noble character, his grand mentality, his great love for God and you both. There is the man; not in his outwards."

Frau Betty expressed herself quaintly sometimes, when very earnest. She went on:

"Were he what men call 'dead,' would you remember obstinacy and unkindness? No, these would vanish from your mind, and only the good in his character remain to comfort you. Can it not be so now, and so help to bring these manifestly forth? These are he, not those others, and so you cannot lose him."

This was a new thought to Leah, or rather, she gained a larger meaning from Frau Betty's application of this thought to her case. She cast a shy little glance at Frau Betty, whose stentorian tones in nowise impaired the kindly

light in her blue eyes. As Leah's own golden ones met these, the voice melted, and she held out her arms.

"*Ach kind, weisst du nicht, dass Gott ist Liebe?*" soothed Leah's heart as of old, and in a minute she was sobbing out the last of her tears on Frau Betty's broad maternal breast.

"So, so. Now look at Milady. She has no fear for this big son of hers." And Leah saw that Milady smiled even now.

"No, Leah, darling. I have been in utter darkness and He brought me out. No darkness again can ever be so great, for the light of Love dispelled the gloom. Of course, child, the same Love can lighten this burden for you."

"Ah yes. How ungrateful of me to forget. After all, Love is the only power, and Love will bring Ezra back to us."

Out came the sunshine after rain! While speaking, Leah had stood with her hands clasped before her, her favorite and unconscious attitude when moved. Now she raised her hands and pushed the soft tendrils of hair from her forehead, and shook her head upwardly and back, while a gladsome smile lit her face, and she laughed, "to think how foolish I've been."

Then they went to the parlor, and Leah sang for Frau Betty, who was enthusiastic over the richness and new tenderness in the voice.

Leah had chosen again the Lullaby of Denee, which she sang that day in the boat for Ezra. Then it had held the glory of thanksgiving. Now, of a wondrous new promise, and with a glance at Miriam, who returned a smile full of meaning, Frau Betty realized that Leah had chosen this way of telling her a precious secret. The secret out, in a minute the three women were in a tumult of happy conjecture, wonderment and importance such as occurs regularly in this humdrum old world on an average of some hundreds of times a minute. They all had to run upstairs and view the grand preparations, and in handling over these dainty belongings of a great unborn, Ezra and his defection were for the half hour, complely forgotten.

It was late when Frau Betty returned home, and Tom, the coachman thought he had never seen a more peaceful and joy-radiating face than hers, as he opened the door of the carriage for her when they reached her home.

Upstairs Milady and Leah fluttered a bit longer over the little lacey things, then said good-night with kisses and soft happy laughter. And so again, the "spirit of the dove" descended, and where had been fear and discord, now bloomed the flowers of peace and trust.

XXI

SEARCHINGS

NOT again did Leah give way to regret. She knew Ezra to be good and loving, and this kept her content and free from anxiety. Let him wander. Love was a loadstone and none may resist its attraction long, be it voiced or no.

For the next month, she and Milady went everywhere—visiting; to the opera; to the museums; and very often to the Christian Science reading rooms and churches. Here they found an atmosphere of peace and security, and gradually Leah came to know that soon Ezra would return; and that he also would find the truth and be happy in it.

Meanwhile Ezra was finding the truth. He was surely meeting it on every side; but it requires more than meeting to make us acquainted with truth.

Truth is like the sunshine; it does not penetrate the windows of a darkened room. So truth must be a welcome guest in our

mental home or consciousness, in order to become a dear familiar. We must want it and seek it, or we shall not recognize it on meeting.

You may say that every human being wants the truth. Yes, but how will he get it if he argues that what he already has, even though this demonstrate not itself, is the truth? Truth is not like any other thing under the sun—it is a Godly Unit, a One that defies division in concept. There is no such argument that truth is thus today and so tomorrow. It must be God, for like Him, it is the same "yesterday, today and forever." Truth is the principle of perfection, and where a thought of vacillation or doubt is harbored, there it ceases to shine.

Open the windows of your soul, Ezra, and let the sunshine in. Put down your adamantine pride. It is the flaw in the diamond of you. Are you to be a victim of superstition and bigotry? Are these a fair exchange for the joys of home, wife, mother, and—God?

Actually Ezra was now arguing thus with himself: "Suppose Mind, Love, was the true God, and he had been deluded and misled as to the nature and office of deity? Surely the world would be beautified by the elimination of wrath and jealousy and pettiness from the concept of most men concerning their heavenly Father! What had governed his own life, for

instance, and kept him in the paths of righteousness, if not the fear that God would punish his strayings if any such he attempted? It surely is better to believe that because God is Love, He cannot let His children stray or be separated from Him. What seems to become so is only the mortal counterfeit, not the real man at all. And finally, the mortal—of which God knows absolutely nothing, as this new philosophy teaches, and perhaps with some degree of justification—must be overcome, and the immortal man recognize himself as having been ever one with the principle of his existence!"

"You cannot separate sums from the principle of mathematics; neither man, as idea, from God, the principle of his eternal existence," Frau Betty had told him that day in the boat at Rosemount.

Somehow this had escaped his memory until now, when all at once heimweh had taken possession of his heart, and he sat and mused on home and loved ones, until every detail of the happy times seemed to become a present actuality. It was startling. Even Frau Betty's visit with its pregnant consequences took on a charm because it was at Rosemount.

Up to the time that Peter related the story of Sojer, Ezra had no fixed plans for the dis-

posal of his time; but this tale suggested a possible interest in going over the grounds where one of the greatest wars in the history of the world was conducted. So he decided to make a tour of the states; through Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky and on to Virginia. After he had visited Gettysburg and Richmond, it then occurred to him that the most interesting point after all, would be in Louisiana, since it was at Baton Rouge that his father fell.

Ezra's restlessness was acute; for no sooner did the thought occur to him then it was acted upon. In less than an hour he was on his way back to New Orleans.

All of this time his fanatical pride had not permitted him to carry out his promise to Jerry. He had not sent him any address, and even had Jerry sent a letter to Mr. Bryant, the latter having no instructions as to Ezra's whereabouts, would have been unable to forward it.

The south offered much in the way of distraction. Everything was so unlike the north. In all the years since the war ended, not much progress had been made in the effort at restoration, and the cloud of depression was merely beginning to disperse; though the novelty of life and manners, with the positive charm of southern graciousness and hospitality was still

in full force. The country would have to be wiped out entirely for this feature to be lost.

On Ezra's return, he met many charming people, though strange to say, he avoided as much as possible, contact with the Jewish contingent, especially in New Orleans, where he might have met distinguished relatives of his parents. He tried to find his own reason for this avoidance, and one evening when the longing for home became so great that he could not put it aside, he remained at his hotel instead of going to the theatre or visiting as usual, and taking the book from the package which Peter had given him, and which up to now had remained unopened, lit his pipe, made himself comfortable in a big leather easy chair, and started in determinedly, because his desire not to read, fought with his purpose to read, whether or no.

Usually Ezra had no difficulty in conquering desire with purpose, but for once desire proved a strenuous opponent. His habit in argument as a lawyer, had always been to establish the justice of the case. This fine quality had of late been obscured by what he considered an attack upon his religious principles. But now that the image of Leah began to haunt, it suddenly occurred to him that he had been to the meanest client who had sought

his aid in his profession, more just than he had been to her in the point at issue between them. This thought it was which made him reach for the book with the purpose of reading it through although he so positively disliked the subject altogether; thus he took up the task as if it was a dose of medicine, determined to drain the cup to the bottom.

He opened the book at random, and as is often the case, at once found a sentence to contradict. The very next sentence, however, appealed to him, and showed that this text-book was no exception to the rule concerning text-books, and could not be read in any desultory fashion. So he turned to the beginning, and pondered long on the opening sentence of the preface; then went on, and by the time he had finished the chapter Science of Being, he was in a good way for self-analysis.

He laid the book down. His pipe had gone out. Far into the morning he sat in his easy chair, one arm thrown behind his head, and his knees crossed. Leah used to call this his "brown study attitude."

Had he been foolish and narrow? After all, there was nothing in this philosophy—as he intended to call this so-called religion—to offend even the most orthodox Jewish taste. One might accept it, if a distinction could be made

between the man Jesus and the Christ-principle. If the latter were the Messiah, as called so by this cult, there was no lessening of Jewish loyalty in considering the question. Regarding the Messiah as a principle instead of as a man, stripped from the character of Jesus the presumption, egotism, and blasphemy with which his name and pretentions had so long been associated in the mind of the average Jew.

"After all, why might not the Messiah prove to be an activity applicable to physical as well as moral or spiritual needs, and to be applied by all who understood its modus and province? Why might the Messiah not be the power of Mind freed from limitation? Men seem to be able to do everything they believed they could do. Why stop short at exercising the power of Mind over the body and its discords? If this could be done—and the proof seemed to have been presented in the healing of mother's eyes and Leah's voice, why should he hesitate to acknowledge it? This surely would be a philosophy on whose grounds Jew and Gentile could meet without friction. It seemed in nowise to detract from the glory of God, but rather to enhance, for it opened up a vista of deific possibilities heretofore undreamed of; while men were still unconsciously conceding to God the utmost limit of omnipotence, because of their

own finite sense of that wherein power really existed."

Ezra heard the town clock strike four. "Pshaw," he said as he stretched himself. "I'll run up to Peter's for a week or two. Perhaps his Nancy will have something to say which will help enlighten me. At all events, it will be a day nearer home." And another hour passed in longing to be there, though this could not be while the smallest doubt remained as to which way his duty lay.

Duty! As with liberty, many "crimes are committed in thy name!"

The dawn opened, and instead of going to bed, after a cold plunge and a change from evening clothes to a travelling tweed, he breakfasted, went to the office, settled his bill, wired to Peter, and in less than an hour was speeding by train to Cane Garden, in the southern part of the state.

XXII

EZRA AT CANE GARDEN, SEES

PETER was waiting at the station with a warm welcome for Ezra. It was February, and winter in its last throes, never very acute in this part of the sunny south. The two and a half mile drive to Cane Garden was delightful. Ezra was charmed. The scenery was novel, the air balmy, and he was with a friend. A wonderful thing that. A friend! And so absolutely rare! At once his nostalgia began to abate, and no small degree of comfort did he experience at the warm greetings which he received at the Hall.

Reuben, Rachel, Mrs. Hill and Nancy were there waiting to welcome him. His heart went out to them all immediately; but the gentle motherliness of Rachel appealed to him most. He devoted this first evening almost entirely to her. Big boy as he was, he wanted his mother. His own not being come-at-a-ble, he took the nearest, and thought her very dear. After a while he found himself, in answer to her kindly

inquiries, speaking of home, and before he knew it he was relating the cause of his wanderings.

"I would gladly return now, if it were not to acknowledge defeat, and lower my dignity," he confided. He had hardly made such acknowledgment to himself, as yet. As the words left his lips, he grew astonished at himself, and half apologized for speaking so much of his own affairs.

"Not at all," said Rachel. "I am much interested in you and your affairs, Ezra—my I?" And she laid a kindly hand on his own. "As you know, my boy has chosen for himself 'a woman from out of the nations,' but she is so sweet and good that she has unconsciously led me to believe that such qualities far surpass in desirability, a wife's obedient but unfelt loyalty to a tradition worshipped by her husband. It seems of vastly more account to me now, that Nancy's predominant qualities should be of the heart rather than the head, for so will she make a better helpmeet for Peter, who is well able to take care of the weightier problems requiring brain capacity, with which all married life is beset. Why not be content to let Leah live out this thought of love in its highest sense, and accept the harmony accruing from her belief, and only interfere when her ideas

lead to folly or injury to practical living? What you tell me concerning the results so far of her new convictions, seem only good. It seems to me you have borrowed trouble."

"Has it been good that we were separated?"

"No. But that seems to have come through your own narrow reasoning. Forgive me," as Ezra started, "it is best to speak plainly. The good which your wife and mother seem to have derived from this new doctrine could not result in evil, for 'like produces like.' This much I have gleaned from Nancy. And it has not offended my orthodoxy one bit. So if evil seems to have followed, it must have arisen in some mistaken thought of your own regarding their change of convictions. I can speak this way to you, my dear boy, because I have had to lay down some of my own cherished plans and opinions, in order to secure the happiness of my son. But he and Nancy have gently led me to see that the paramount necessity in religion, as in all else, is for that which satisfies the individual soul-craving. And perhaps our religion has been cold and perfunctory—not in fact, but in the present day mistaken interpretation."

"Then, dear Mrs. Carillon, do you not believe me bound by the example, if not the name of my forefather?"

"Not at all. The problems of that day were quite unlike those of this day. And there was much superstition and bigotry mixed up with the rather pugilistic worship of God by our forefathers. Progress has brought enlightenment, and the wide-awake Jew of today relegates those things to the dead past. Those were the days of idolatrous worship, the idol being a cruel and cast iron code of materialistic reverence for and worship of an unknown god. Now, from what I learn from my children on the subject, a new god has been discovered, and proven to be the very one conceived of by our first forbears, but lost sight of until the advent of the great teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, who suffered so much in order to prove his theory of God as only Good.

"Again after his seeming failure to establish his views, they were lost sight of, and now they are brought to light once more, and prove, if works can prove anything, that the true worship of God results in a surcease of evil in the world. Even if another does not readily perceive it, the comfort and joy of such belief to the one entertaining it, is so great, that to my mind, no one has the right to deny such privilege. Let each individual work out his own life-problem, and learn that to be a husband does not give one the right to deprive

another of the liberty of spiritual self-government. Moreover to withdraw from a position mistakenly assumed, is no blemish to one's dignity, but rather an enhancment."

Ezra listened breathlessly. Rachel had not said anything so very different to Peter's words, but something, the motherliness perhaps, of her manner, carried conviction. Perhaps he had been ignorant as well as tyrannical, and surely Leah and he loved each other too well for any breach between them to be permanent. He arose, and taking Rachel's hand, carried it to his lips.

"Perhaps I shall say 'God bless you' for this some day. I cannot now say how much I thank you."

Rachel smilingly said, "There is no need," and then the others entering the room, conversation became general.

When Ezra retired for the night he was conscious of greater peace than had been his for many a day. The next morning he awoke with a mind more willing to be taught, and he made a resolution that he would cease to mentally combat the new ideas which might be presented to him, so long as he remained at Cane Garden.

After breakfast Nancy took charge of him. They went together on Nancy's rounds, and

brought up at the cabin. As usual, Sojer was sunning himself outside the door.

"Good-morning, Sojer. I've brought you a visitor," gayly called Nancy.

At the sound of her voice Sojer looked up from a pipe he was cleaning.

"Good-morning, Missy," he said. "Welcome to you and the visitor too. What is his name?"

Nancy had been rejoiced in the last month or so to notice a marked change in Sojer. He had, heretofore, seemed unable to carry out a line of thought for any given time, whereas he now had at last begun to connect ideas, and follow them out to a finish for at least two or three times every day. She had been careful that these gleams of intelligence were nurtured, and centered on thoughts leading gently back to the past. He had once spoken of a little child. "A son" he had "left at home to care for his sick mother." But when asked the name of the child he could not recall it. When meeting any one for the first time, it had become his custom to invariably ask "What is his name?" as though seeking a hint from mention of new names, by which he might find his own.

When Nancy answered, "Mr. Halevi, Sojer," a strange thing happened. Sojer dropped his pipe! He arose trembling, and to the astonish-

ment of Ezra and Nancy, broke into little feeble cries.

"*Halevi? What is Halevi? Did I ever know Halevi? Quick, quick! Help me Nancy! I am God's perfect idea! Oh, I am God's perfect child!*"

He fell back on his seat, while immediately Nancy was on her knees beside him. Sinking her face in her raised hands, she spoke to him gently and firmly, and evidently for his ear alone, and soon his trembling ceased.

Ezra watched them in amazement. Nancy at length ceased speaking, and the two remained silently in their respective positions hardly long enough for him to regain his composure, when a low cry from Sojer called Nancy back to a material sense of things.

"My God, Nancy, it is my name! I remember now. Oh, yes. Halevi is my name!"

Ezra came hastily forward.

"What do you say, sir? Your first name if you please?"

"*Julius!*" *almost shrieked the old man.* "*And my boy's name was Ezra. Yours? Your name young man?*"

"My name is Ezra." And Ezra bared his head, and bowed before the hands raised as though to bless. Tremblingly the hands rested on the dark head.

"Ah, my heavenly Father, is such a thing possible? Your mother, boy, her name? No, do not answer! Let me speak it: *Miriam, my Miriam, and blind.*"

"Yes, Miriam, father, but not blind."

The hands fell.

"No? Say you so? Then after all I have been mistaken. God's will be done."

"God's will has been done, dear father—for I know that you are my father—it has been done for my mother. He has restored sight to those eyes which will now hunger to look upon us both. Come, come let me take you to her!

"Nancy, Peter, friends, this is my father!—My father, I tell you!"

Peter, who had followed them closely from the Hall, now came nearer with Nancy.

"I believe it, Ezra. Let us go to the Hall and help Sojer to gather up the threads of his memory."

And gently he turned the party towards the home, Nancy on his arm, and Ezra drawing Sojer's hand within his own.

Such a bewilderedly happy party as that which gathered around the log fires that night at Cane Garden! With recognition, had come full return of memory to Julius, and the tale he told was as an Arabian Night's fantasy.

Jackson, a great big fellow, now employed

at Cane Garden as a house-boy, was sent off in post-haste to tell uncle Remus and aunt Mandy that Sojer had come to, and was at the Hall.

"Yes, and Sojer gon' tell dey all 'bout what de matter wus, an' youse all to come up an' heah him," breathlessly declared Jackie, who had run every step of the way. He left his parents to prink up for a visit to the Hall, and ran over to Laurel Hill for Serena. Sojer had asked that these good friends be present when he told his tale, and now they stood around the doorways and listened open-mouthed and with many exclamations, as he related his experiences to the friends about the fireplace.

He remembered, he said, the wild rush he had led his men, up to the very teeth of the enemy's lines and how they fell into an ambush. Many went down. Just as he received a blow or shot in the head, and before he lost consciousness, he saw the boys in blue in close hand-to-hand combat with the grey. He swooned, and could not tell how long he lay unconscious; but when he did recover his senses he was in a very strange way. Wholly unable to move or cry out, he was a witness to the dreadful carnage around him. Men were falling here, there, and everywhere; and a horse all but stepped upon his face. He closed his eyes and the danger passed. For an hour or more as it seemed, he

went through this horror, and then as the darkness began to fall, a retreat was sounded from his own camp, and as the boys worked their way back with face to the enemy, one stepped over him, uttered an exclamation, and fell on his knees beside him. He recognized his friend Lieutenant Luria, with whom he had made his compact, but could give no sign of life in response to his beseechings.

"Luria stripped a belt from my suspenders," he went on, "and bound it tightly about my head, and chafed my hands and arms vigorously but then seemed to conclude that his labor was in vain. He wept like a child while going through the last sad rites, as he supposed, for a friend; unbuckled my sword; searched my pockets and put their contents together with a chain and locket from around my neck, in his own pocket; pressed a kiss and left a tear on my cheek; stretched out my limbs; placed a handkerchief over my face; and sorrowfully joined the remnant of the company now fleeing towards the camp.

"I realized that I was in a desperate situation. While I felt sure that I had been giving signs, although slight, of life, it is evident that these were very feeble and not enough to startle him from his belief that I was dead; the whole thing was done so quickly.

"Many had fallen so near the enemy's lines that the task of bringing in the wounded had to be conducted with the utmost precaution. It was evident that only those who showed signs of life were to be carried away in the first attempt, and the horror of feeling myself left in this way, unable even to see the efforts of the rescuers owing to the handkerchief on my face, was so great that I swooned again.

"It was a sweltering hot night, and I had longed for water. If only some one would dash a cup of water over my face and put a drop on my tongue, I felt it would break the spell that was binding me. It must have been near four o'clock when consciousness returned, and with it I found I had regained the power to move. It was scarcely yet dawn, but I could make out the figures lying all about me, and left for dead.

"I must get away. Away from the dreadful place. Back to the camp, but first water! Water, or I should go mad! On hands and knees I scrambled and crawled in the direction, I thought, of the creek. Crawled through bushes and over stones, my fatigue uniform catching in branches and being torn upon the rocks. Would I never reach the water?"

"At last I saw its silvery gleam! 'Oh dear river!' I thought. 'Wait for me! Wait for

me! Wait for me! I am coming!' The sight gave me new and fierce strength, and I sprang to my feet and ran—yes, actually ran to the bank, when it all faded from me. I put out my hand to grasp and hold it—but no, it eluded me, and the very last thing which I recall was my own wild cry, followed by a piteous moaning, as I reached, and reached, and reached, for the life-saving fluid which simply went from my ken, with memory."

The breathless pause which followed this recital, was broken by a loud wail from aunt Mandy, who could no longer restrain herself:

"Fo' de Lawd, Sojer, dat's where we foun' yer. Yaas, he was a wanderin' aroun' like he los' he wits. Remus an' me, we went down dere by de creek to look fo' po' ole Spokane, de cow what broke loose dat very same day, an' we dun heah a moanin' an a bawlin' comin' from over acrost de creek. We walked down de opsit bank tell we com' to de bridge. Remus, he went over, an I stayed dere. It was so near de battle groun' we had to go sof'ly.

"Befo' Remus reached de end of de bridge he turn roun' and make wid his han' so—illustrating—fo' me to come. I run, I kin tell yer, an dere was a man jus' fallin' to de groun'. Remus, he said when he seen him fus' he was a stan'in' up an walkin' roun' an a ringin' his

han's so—again illustrating. We went up to him an he didn't seem to know it. Only he moan an cry, 'water, water, my God, water!' So Remus, he take his cap an' fill it an' give Sojer a good drink, an' I bathe his face an' we took him home, and de res' you all know, praise de Lawd, all ye His saints."

And the good old soul, forgetting entirely the presence of the master and mistress, went off into a loud burst of noisy tears.

Sojer arose and went over to the humble group near the door.

"So it was you, aunt Mandy and uncle Remus," taking a hand of each, "who saved me? I wish, oh how I wish I could remember it and all the kindness you must have shown me since. That memory has gone forever. But I do remember from at least four weeks back, and never was man more kindly and lovingly treated. You must know me hereafter as your staunch friend, and perhaps some day I can do something to prove my grateful affection for you both."

He then turned to Nancy.

"And you Nancy, I consider God's instrument in my restoration. Do you remember the day I told you I had a son whom I had left at home to care for his mother? This was the day after you told me to say, 'I am a child of

God,' and the very first on which a gleam of memory came to me. Since then the light has been growing brighter, and all is clear in my mind as to events from then until now. I can only pray that God may bless your future richly, and assure you that I shall not neglect the study of the curative system you employed so successfully for me. Ezra, my son, I can never tell you how good these kind friends have all been to me. I am sure they will now help us to get home as quickly as possible. Each moment seems an age."

This was the signal for the servants to retire. Rachel urged that Sojer remain at the Hall, but Sojer felt that this last night should be passed with his humble friends at the cabin, and as Ezra would not lose sight of his father, and they had so much to say to each other, it was arranged, much to the good old couple's delight, that he too, should spend that night at the cabin and both come to the Hall in the morning for breakfast and a farewell visit.

Uncle Remus and aunt Mandy felt this honor keenly, and their cup of joy was full and running over when Ezra arranged to take Jackson along as his father's man. This was more reward than they ever could have dreamed of, though truth to tell, the question of recompense had never entered their thoughts.

Jackson accompanied them to the cabin with some belongings of Ezra, and when he was told of the good fortune in store for him, he grinned so broadly and so long that his mother pounded him on the back, saying:

"You stop larfin' you great gawk. You want to lose yo' eyes an' yo' teef?"

Jackie's mouth went closed with a snap, and his eyes grew normal, which greatly relieved Ezra of the fear that he might have stayed so.

Reuben was easily persuaded to part with Jackie "for his good" as he said; and after some training he became a faithful and valuable valet to his new master.

There was no sadness about the farewells next morning. Both men expressed the hope of meeting their kind hosts again; and Ezra begged that the honeymoon of Peter and Nancy or at least a part of it, be spent at Rosemount. Ezra declared that the two "miracles" should not be strangers to each other, and Peter gladly concurred in this opinion.

XXIII

HOMEWARD BOUND

THE quickest way home was by train, and therefore this method was chosen for the journey; and it so happened that just six months to the day from the time that Ezra left Rosemount, he found himself returning, but under circumstances least dreamed of by him.

He had found his father through and under the auspices of the very system of religion which he had held responsible for his leaving home. He was at last thinking of this philosophy as a religion, for he had seen in those advocating it, nothing but the kindliest patience and forbearance manifested, not only to himself and his stubborn opposition, but towards each other and all differing forms of belief and worship.

Yes, the utmost tolerance and largest charity had been exhibited in their attitude to each other. Think of Rachel giving up her own ideas to secure Peter's happiness, Peter having first yielded his desires to hers! He would

once have considered this a trivial circumstance—the "chance" which led him to Cane Garden and the discovery of his father. But now he was beginning to be chary about crediting chance with such benevolence; and to look upon the chain of circumstances drawing him to Cane Garden as the direct leading-string of a divine guidance. He noted that almost simultaneously with his willingness to look into the truth as contained in the book which Peter had given him, had come the impulse to accept Peter's invitation to visit his home, which invitation he had had no intention of accepting until then.

Surely it must have been truth leading him by ways he knew not, and now should he not trust it further? Yes, he would; and if it were indeed truth and love leading them all, forgiveness for his obstinate folly would not be witheld by his dear ones at home, and happiness might still be theirs.

In a vague way all these thoughts were passing through his mind during the preparations for the journey. When at last father and son sat opposite each other in a private section of the Pullman, having waved long adieux to the friends left behind on the platform, they clasped hands and gazed into each others faces as though such study alone could prove the

reality of the moment to their happy thought.

There was so much to tell on both sides, but the father's story could better wait for the family circle, so Ezra related for his father's greedy ear, every detail he could remember at the time, of the years passed since his father went to the war. There were so many interruptions and not a few tears shed, as the pathos of the long and seemingly unnecessary separation appealed to them both.

But now a question arose.

"How are we to let your mother know, Ezra?" asked his father.

"I have been wondering about that myself, father. Perhaps it would be just as well to call as a visitor who could tell her something of my father, and for me to prepare her for such a visit. You see, sir, it is a double-barrelled problem. I have myself to make my peace with my mother and wife." And Ezra looked the penitent he felt.

"Well, son, I am sure it can be worked out in accordance with the law of harmony. It is blessed to know that any crisis may be safely passed without harm from shock. I am willing to let divine Love find and lead the way."

"You seem father, to have adopted this new mode of thinking very readily yourself?"

"Yes. I cannot say however that I even

begin to understand it. I have faith, because I have experienced its efficacy. I remember the very moment it appealed to me. Its action was wonderful! I first became conscious that I was in a dream. Then that I was being awakened. Then that the mists of mesmerism were thinning out, and suddenly I saw through them. It began when Nancy first made me declare that I was 'a child of God.' Now I feel it would be the basest ingratitude not to investigate further, and, finding what I hope for, fail to live and proclaim it."

"Have you no fear, sir, of ridicule, or avoidance from our people, the Jews?"

"No. I have been dead so long to the world, that I do not know exactly on what lines progress has been most made. But I expect to find many of our people in line with the march of intelligent revision and broadening in religion as well as in all else. And who knows? Perhaps the day of material worship is waning. What you say regarding the obligation your name has imposed, opens my eyes to the folly of ever teaching children about things of which we are really ignorant ourselves. How dreadful to tell a child 'God will punish you,' thus personalizing and materializing its idea of God. At once the child begins to try and be good from fear of God instead of from love of good,

and perhaps I made a mistake, Ezra, in your baby-days, to have filled your mind with those tales from the Bible which to myself, I could never explain satisfactorily. I believe the only solution will be a spiritual interpretation. But I must wait and get my thoughts adjusted to the present, for you know, my boy, I am still informed only as to the past."

"And in that past, father—does anything in it justify the meaning I gleaned from your exhortation to me to 'be as good a man as your ancestor Ezra, and your mother and I will be content?' That is, I thought you meant that I was to follow his example in all ways as nearly as possible considering the difference in the ages. So I have become a lawyer, with the hope of promotion to a judgeship; and the belief that I should not keep for wife one who has renounced the religion of her fathers, and so become 'a woman of other nations' is the cause of my present separation from my wife. Would you hold me justified in this?"

"I hardly think you had sufficient cause, my dear boy. Ezra your ancestor, was not himself married to a woman whom he divorced for any such reason. The men whom he divorced according to the Jewish law of the time, had married women who were already heathen. Your Leah was a devout Jewish maiden, I

believe you said, and her acceptance of a broader and more demonstrable conception of God as Love could hardly be called heathenism. Besides, Ezra of old time was not a lawyer except in the sense of administering the law of God, or more likely, of Moses. He was a priest, and you have again made a mistake. You see how superficially, though diligently, we read the great Book! Now, though as yet I have grasped but an impression of this new religion, I see that it teaches the purest Judaism—that is, the oneness of God—and that it was taught and practiced by a Jew, and such a Jew as only the grossest materialist could honestly find fault with. Of course my old-time idea of the man was different. But truly, 'we shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye,' and in the last four weeks of Nancy's ministrations and reading to me from the New Testament the story of Jesus, his birth, life, crucifixion, probation in the flesh, followed by the ascension, seemed to make a marvellous impression—an impression of goodness and martyrization replacing the old idea that his punishment had been fully deserved and divinely arranged. No evil deed did his history reveal, but only a constant return of good for evil. He was a Jew, and one who had at an early age, a demonstrable understanding of God which was wholly

lacking in the pious leaders and rabbis whom he 'confounded with his knowledge' when only twelve years of age.

"However, one thing we both have learned: *That we need not worship the man, but the principle he taught, as the Messiah.* They call this principle of truth, 'the Christ,' and so we can accept the Christ as the Messiah or impersonal Savior, without the least violence to our feelings as Jews.

"One declaration which he made to his disciples, who by the by were all Jews, Nancy repeatedly read to me; it was, 'The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth;' and she used to add, 'That is how the great master worshipped God—not in matter, not in error;' and so somehow I got the thought that those 'true worshippers' must be the children of Israel; that they were His 'chosen people' and not merely the Jews; that those of any nation turning to Him 'in spirit and in truth,' became at once an Israelite, and thus a 'chosen' child.

"Then too, I think I see how this religion, upsetting all the preconceived ideas of the nature of deity, and establishing a conception wholly different to every other save that of this man, Jesus, alone, will ultimately gather in all nations and peoples into its fold, for all,

Gentile, Heathen, and Jew, will have equally laid down an outgrown and so useless belief of what God is, and what constitutes sonship and nearness to Him. Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy, 'And they shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.'"

"I can't tell you how much this relieves me, father. I believe you have swept away the last remnant of doubt that I have made a woeful mistake. At all events I know now that Leah is more to me than any tradition. You will love her, father."

"I expect to my son."

And now the train began to slow down, and soon pulled into the station at R——. It was five o'clock, and a dull, chilly winter evening. After the baggage-master had been instructed to hold the trunks and boxes until further notice, and a room in the village secured for Jackie, who was to follow with the things later, Ezra and his father, each with a grip in hand, stood and looked at each other. Was ever situation so intricate? One returning home unannounced from the dead, the other from a self-imposed exile of six months' duration!

"Puzzling, isn't it, father? Suppose we walk

up to the house stopping at Jerry's on the way. He may be able to help us out. At any rate the walk will give us time to think."

"Very well. But how long a walk is it? Every moment seems so much more lost. It is the best we can do, though."

And the two men trudged up the road for their two miles' walk in almost complete silence, each busy with his own thoughts, hopes and expectations.

By the time they reached Jerry's place it was quite dark and had begun to snow. The glow from the fireplace filtering through the unshaded window, showed the way up the path. Jerry always kept his shade up in the winter evenings, "For the sake of wayfarers," he said. The lamp too was lit, and as the two stepped upon the porch and looked in, a comfortable picture presented itself.

The old man was at the table reading aloud to Mary, who sat completely swallowed up in the cushioned softness of a big rocking-chair, a lazy, old Angora beside her. Some fairy tale it must have been, for notwithstanding that as her grandfather read he kept one foot on the rocker and gently swayed the big chair, Mary was wide-awake, her big eyes open to their fullest.

Ezra put his face close to the glass, and

then Mary uttered a little cry: "Why, grandpa, there is Mr. Ezra!"

The next moment, kitten, little girl and all were bundled on the floor, Mary scrambling to her feet first, and in a minute had the front door open and flung herself upon Ezra. Her greeting moved him, and he stooped and kissed her. By this time the grandfather had reached the door; his astonishment had delayed him.

"Welcome, welcome, master Ezra!" he cried, ushering him and the stranger into the sitting-room and making them sit by the fire. Ezra shook the snow from his cap into the chimney-place.

"Well, my friend, here I am, and now quick, tell me about my wife and mother." And as Jerry looked inquiringly at his father he added, "This, sir, is a dear friend; you will know him better later."

Jerry bowed to his visitor, who extended his hand with a smile.

"Though for the present I must remain a mystery, you will not refuse to shake hands with a wayfarer you are befriending?"

"No, indeed. The judge's approval is enough for me. You are welcome, sir, very welcome."

When he was again asked for news, his eyes plainly said, "Before a stranger, sir?" Ezra answered in the same sign language, "Before

this stranger, yes." Jerry called Katy to take Mary to bed, then drawing a chair close said:

"Of course you have had no news of home, Mr. Ezra?"

"No, none, Jerry, and I am starved. The ladies are well, are they not?"

"Well, sir, Milady is as usual with her—well and strong; but our dear Mrs. Leah—she seems to have gone under, sir."

"What do you mean, Jerry? Is she alive? Quick man! Don't keep me in suspense!" And Ezra arose, pushing his chair with a loud noise away from the fireplace.

"Oh yes, Mr. Ezra. Thank God, she is alive. But as the time of her trial draws near, she seems to have lost heart; and the nurse who is to attend her says, that unless she has mental relief from some grief that weighs on her mind, she cannot answer for the consequences. Frau Betty is much with her, but says that Mrs. Leah must help herself more. She knows the truth, and if she makes no effort to realize it, Frau Betty herself can help her but little. The ladies returned last week from town, for Mrs. Leah said that 'the heir to Rosemount must be born at home.' Milady had taken her to town for Christmas, thinking to chipper her up by the change. She was different for awhile, but now does not seem to care to make an effort to

even live. Thank God you have come, for I fear you had soon been too late."

Ezra reeled under the double shock. Leah ill, and from such a cause! His mind, always slow in emergencies, could not take in his own approaching dignity. He hardly sensed the news that he was to be a father. He could only think of the fact that Leah was ill, and wanted him in spite of his cruel behavior to her.

"We must go at once! Come sir, let us go! No, no, we cannot lose the time necessary to harness Maiden and bring the trap around."

"He was out of the front door and dragging his dazed father by the hand along the path in less time than it takes to tell. Once on the road, Sojer had hard work to keep up with him. Rosemount seemed an interminable distance from the cottage. But at last they reached the gate leading to the rose-garden. Ezra would have entered by the side door as the shortest way, but fumbling with his keys in the dark was worse, so he sped around to the front entrance and beat an excited tattoo on the knocker. Tom opened the door and fell back against the door gasping. Good servant that he was, he soon recovered, and to Ezra's impatient:

"Where is my mother, Tom?"

He quickly answered: "I will call her, sir,"

and opened the door leading to the drawing-room.

As Tom went to find Milady, Ezra drew his father towards the door, and gently pushing him in the room, said:

"I will send her to you. Make yourself known with as little shock as possible. It will be her second, poor dear."

He then returned to the hall and had put impatient foot on the first step when he heard the soft silken rustle of her garments on the landing above. She floated down to him, finger on lips, and when she was on the fifth step from the bottom he reached up and took her the rest in his strong arms.

"Mother, my precious mother! Have I sinned beyond pardon?"

"Ah, my boy. Could a child do that? No—a thousand times no. God has been very good to me and has answered my prayer!"

"Leah?" breathed Ezra.

"Needs you. Frau Betty has just succeeded in quieting her. You had better see Frau Betty first, and dear, follow her advice, even though you do not understand it."

"Mother mine, I shall understand it, for I, too, have found the truth. Oh, God will spare her to me, I know, for I have learned to worship Him with her. He has led this blind boy

of yours 'by a way he knew not of,' and while my faith is newer born and not as vigorous as yours, you 'help my unbelief,' for since I see you so quiet and serene, I too, believe that as God is her life, no other so-called power can separate her from me."

"Dear Ezra! The joy of it will lift her up. You shall go at once to her. But Tom said a gentleman was with you. Can I see to his comfort until you are ready to be with him?"

"His visit is to you, mother. I leave him to explain himself. I believe a happier day than we ever knew has dawned for us all. Bless me, mother, and let me go."

XXIV

REUNITED

EZRA went upstairs, and Miriam turned to the drawing-room. As she entered, a gentleman who was leaning with an elbow on the mantlepiece, straightened himself up and "stood at attention." As Miriam drew nearer he bowed, and she spoke:

"My son tells me, sir, that your visit is to me. In what way can I serve you?"

Agitation made it difficult for Sojer to speak. He choked, but managed to say huskily:

"Madam, I have ventured to call and ask you some questions after all these years, concerning your husband, who I am told served as captain in the Civil War, under McDowell. I regret, or would regret to open up old wounds, were it not for the fact that I believe I can say something of him, which may ease the regret of your never having been able to lay him away near you."

Miriam's heart beat loudly at this laying of a strange finger upon a sore spot, but she said:

"Sir, since my son brought you here, I conclude you have good reason for touching upon the only grief of my life. If you can tell me something of my husband's last hours, and where he was laid, I shall be grateful."

Something like a sob broke from the man before her. She went a step nearer.

"You knew him?" she asked.

"Yes, yes, dear lady. None knew him better. I was with him when the bullet struck him down. Could you bear to hear particulars?"

What was there peculiar in this man's voice? Miriam put her hand to her eyes, closing them.

"Tell me please," she said. "But pray be seated first."

"Pardon, let me stand, if you please, Mir—dear lady."

Miriam with eyes closed, seemed to hear more keenly. She grew frightened, not knowing why the tones of this man's voice should affect her so.

"Who are you, sir? Pray tell me your name? Your voice in some way recalls old memories. Please tell me your story, and pardon if I keep my eyes closed. I seem to hear you better so."

"Madam, is it because you once were blind?"

"Yes. How do you know?" asked Miriam sharply.

"You became blind suddenly while walking in the garden with your lover, who afterwards became your blessed husband?"

Miriam wrung her hands and moaned.

"Sir, unless your reason is very good, how dare you intrude upon such a sorrow?"

The man went on: "You had a son; he was seven when you sent your husband to the war. You sewed a ring in the lining of your husband's coat, over his heart. Miriam! Is this the ring? Oh Miriam—don't you know your Julius?"

But Miriam had fainted. He caught her as she fell forward, and tenderly placed her in a chair. Holding her head against his breast he sobbingly prayed:

"*Father, she is thy perfect idea. Joy is not a destroyer, but Thy heavenly, spiritual gift. Help me to realize Thy potent presence.*"

Miriam's weakness was momentary. She half heard the words, and in a vague way was conscious of gratitude for them. Her Ezra had not only returned to her, but he was clothed in the garment of righteousness, that is, right thinking! She took his hand and pulled him down to his knees beside her, still keeping her eyes closed.

"Husband," she murmured. "My husband! I knew you the moment you spoke. My heart

knew you. Oh, I thank God. I thank my God. But how—tell me how and why you have been kept from me all these years?"

"It is a long story, dear wife. Our boy has told me of your wonderful restoration to sight, and now the same power which opened the blind eyes, has made your husband free. I was shot in the head, Miriam, and left on the field for dead. I was rescued by a good old colored couple, and taken care of for years, but with a total loss of memory, caused as they believed, by the bullet in the brain. The wound healed over, but memory never returned until four weeks ago under the treatment of one of God's angels, a young girl-advocate of this beautiful new truth. For the first time then, I remembered I had a wife and son. My own name had gone from me, and they called me 'Sojer' until the day Ezra came. The mention of his name in introduction caused such disturbance that Nancy was obliged to pray for me. I rose from that prayer a free man, and the very next day Ezra brought me home, himself a convinced man through having witnessed this marvellous demonstration."

"How can we ever prove our gratitude to God?"

"By living in the light as He has given us to see the light."

It may be forgiven this reunited pair that for awhile they thought only of themselves. There was so much on both sides to be told, and new acquaintance to be made, and far into the night they sat and talked of their experiences, while upstairs another scene of wonder was taking place.

Ezra turned from his mother and went up the stairs two at a time. He was met at the top by Frau Betty, who was walking up and down the hall for a little change from the sick room. She placed a quick finger on her lips as she saw Ezra come forward with outstretched hand. She took this in her disengaged one, and drew him to the end of the hall fartherest from Leah's room.

"Sh' sh'. She has just fallen asleep. If you can sit quietly by her for a little, you may. Her sleep will refresh her, and when she shows signs of awaking we can tell how best to let her know you are here. But, Mr. Halevi, I must ask you to try and not place mental limitation on her, or my efforts for her. True, you have no faith in the efficacy of prayer to heal the sick, but they who understand the true nature of prayer have such faith, and it is at her own desire that this faith is now exercised. So, if you cannot sympathize, at least

grant her the right of self-government, and keep your thought passive."

"You are mistaken wholly, Frau Betty. It is now my joy as well as my privilege to have become acquainted with God as the healer of disease as well as of unrighteousness. Later I will tell you more, but now let me go to her. I promise to be very careful and prudent."

"*Ach, kind weisst du nicht, dass Gott ist Liebe!* I see now the expression so different in your eyes. I am so happy for you. Come."

And she led the way to Leah's bedside, and left him there alone with his wife. Ezra sank on his knees by the bed, his face in his hands. He hardly dared look at her, fearing he knew not what. Would she be changed? Had sorrow left an indelible mark? What a fool he had been. Would she, could she, forgive him?

Such thoughts as these made him very humble. Even did she forgive him, how little he deserved it. He must take it as a free gift, and with God's help, live so as to prove himself worthy.

Soothed and comforted by his aspirations, he raised his head and looked at her. Oh how hungry he was! Dear soul, in the abandon of sleep her grief showed plainly. There were a few lines in her face; and now and then a little catching of her breath, very like a sob, Ezra

thought, escaped her. She looked so ethereal that he could hardly control the grip of fear which seized his heart.

He felt that the time of his own trial had come. He must overcome his fear, or the result might be dire. He bowed his head again, and shutting out his material sense of discord, declared for the perfection of man as made "in the image and likeness of God." He would not be deceived by the evidences of matter or of the senses; but would know that the life of God's child was in Mind, and indestructible. God had created His child perfect, and matter could not impair this birthright.

He remained in this attitude until the nurse came and touched him on the shoulder. Frau Betty had explained his presence to her, so without any show of surprise, she said:

"Mr. Halevi, you had better leave us. There are signs of a change, and some work for us to do."

Ezra staggered to his feet and towards the door. Frau Betty was coming in, and said:

"Fear nothing, Mr. Halevi. Try to know there is but one Power, the Omnipotent Mind."

"Shall I call my mother?" he asked.

"If you please."

Ezra went down the stairs as one in a dream. He broke into the drawing-room.

"Mother, Leah needs you, he said abruptly."

Miriam, brought rudely back to the present, arose quickly.

"Yes, my boy, I'm going. But fear nothing. The same loving Father who has united us, will not separate us, and there is no other power."

And she left the two men together, the happiness of the one reflecting beneficently on the other, and gradually calm and confidence returned.

An hour or more passed. Then Miriam came to the door. Her face was very serious.

"Ezra, my son, you are a father." Ezra tightened his grip on her hand. She went on: "Leah has not revived however, and Frau Betty bids me say that you have the right to now decide whether a physician shall be called, or to trust the case fully to God. She is doing her best, but feels that Leah has not made any effort to help herself; and indeed for some time past has seemed rather to wish that she might not recover, or at all events, not to care sufficiently to second Frau Betty's efforts for her."

A beautiful light as of inspiration broke over Ezra's face.

"Mother, is not God the same yesterday, today and forever? He gave me my Leah, and He will protect her now. I shall go to her. His goodness cannot fail. I shall prove this for myself."

And in a minute he was at Leah's bedside. This time there was no self-abasement. He had risen to the stature of manhood in Christ. Exaltation was in his countenance and voice as he took Leah's limp hand in his and cried:

"In the name of Christ, I say unto you, rise! There is no death. God gave you life and evil cannot take it away. Live, live, I say, and glorify Him!"

Ezra was himself glorified. The head on the pillow turned, and the closed blue eyelids quivered. A little sigh escaped the lips, then the words:

"Ezra, my Ezra. I thought I heard his voice. Good-night, dear. Good-night."

The head settled gently down into the pillow, and Frau Betty came forward and took Leah's hand from Ezra's and laid it down beside her.

"Amen and amen. You have made the demonstration, Mr. Halevi, and she is now safe."

"I thank Thee, Father of heaven and earth, that Thou hast heard my prayer. Dear Frau Betty, give me the 'Little Book' and leave me now with her."

For the next five hours of refreshing sleep, Ezra sat at the bedside, at times reading to himself and at times feasting upon the face and

form of his beloved as vitality and harmony were gradually being manifested on them. Once he heard a little cry from the nurse's room. "How wonderful!" But he would not look at this new "miracle," until she should see it with him. This hour belonged to God, and—her. Several times Frau Betty came in, and once his mother and the nurse. He persuaded his mother to retire to rest.

"You have had a strenuous day, mutterchen. Bring my father here for a moment, and then to bed with you both."

Sojer came on tiptoe and peeped at Ezra's little girl, laid his hand on Ezra's head and went away with Miriam. Frau Betty too, was persuaded to retire, Ezra promising to call if needful.

So now he was left alone. It was about four o'clock in the morning when she awoke. Her eyes opened wide upon him, and with an angelic smile she said:

"I knew you would come, my husband."

Ezra, very, very gently, lest he should excite her:

"And you receive me, beloved?"

"Oh, yes, yes. You will never leave me more?"

"No, my dear one. God has opened these blind eyes of mine. Together, hand in hand

will we walk in His way, forever and forever."

He stooped and kissed her.

"I thank Him, oh, I thank Him," she murmured and fell asleep again, his hand clasped tightly in her own. Ezra laid his head alongside of hers on the pillow and, he too, fell asleep.

In the morning they found them so, awoke, and sent him to his room.

XXV

CONCLUSION

DOES the reader want more? The rest is all joyful and may be briefly told. Leah grew well and strong, rejoicing that it was Ezra who had realized the truth for her and so made more than amends for all they had suffered. For the little touch of human womanhood in her did not object to the knowledge that he had suffered too.

Ezra was introduced to his son and heir, and soon grew past the stage of holding him gingerly, and almost letting him drop. He was a wise little fellow, and always raised his brows in mild surprise and used his fists unsparingly when Ezra failed to hold him according to his own ideas of comfort.

Leah was up and dressed and in an easy chair by the window when they decided what to name him. Leah wanted it to be Ezra the third. But Ezra would run no risk of the possible repetition of his own mistake, and suggested "Peter" in honor of his friend, the

rabbi, who had done so much to help him "be clothed and in his right mind." Leah gladly acquiesced, and now happy preparations were made for the honeymoon visit of Peter and Nancy, whom Leah could hardly wait to welcome. Frau Betty was persuaded to remain and meet the young couple before taking up her work again in the city.

Leah had crept at once into the affections of Julius, and soon grew to love him as a father. His wonderful tale had been told them all, including uncle Jerry, who began to grow young again in the renewed happiness of his beloved people at Rosemount.

The day of the arrival came bright and clear. Spring was in the air, the birds returned, and were noisily nesting. Rosemount was beautiful. It was too early for the roses, but in this respect alone was it less brilliantly arrayed for this honeymoon than for its first one of a little less than a year ago.

"Never mind" said Leah to Ezra, as they walked with arms entwined, in the rose-garden, we shall keep them till the roses come. See, the bushes are full of buds. It will be lovely to see them bloom."

"Not nearly so lovely as your own blooming, sweet little wife and mother."

Leah raised eyes full of happy tears to him.

"It is the case of the vine and the oak, dear husband and father," she said.

Ezra bared his head.

"And if I in the strength be lifted up, the strength, oh Father, is all thine own."

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